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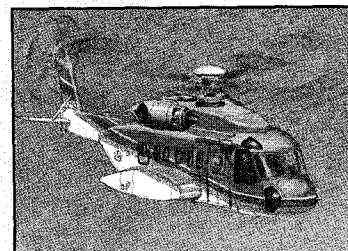
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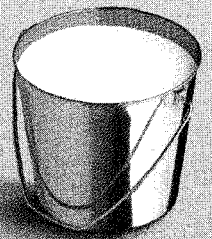


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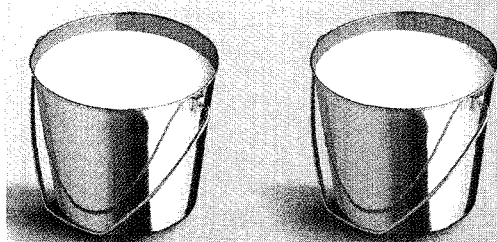


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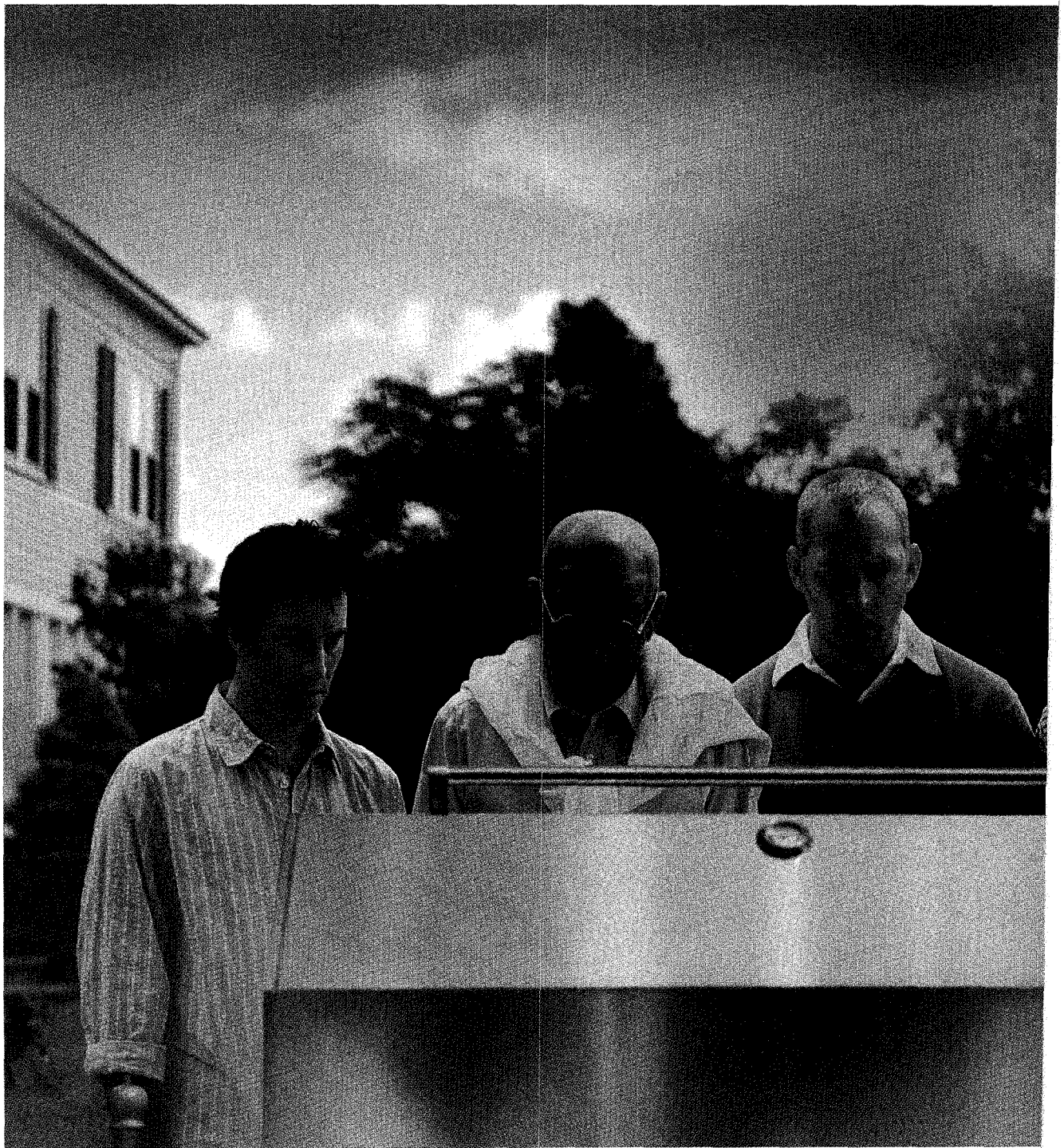
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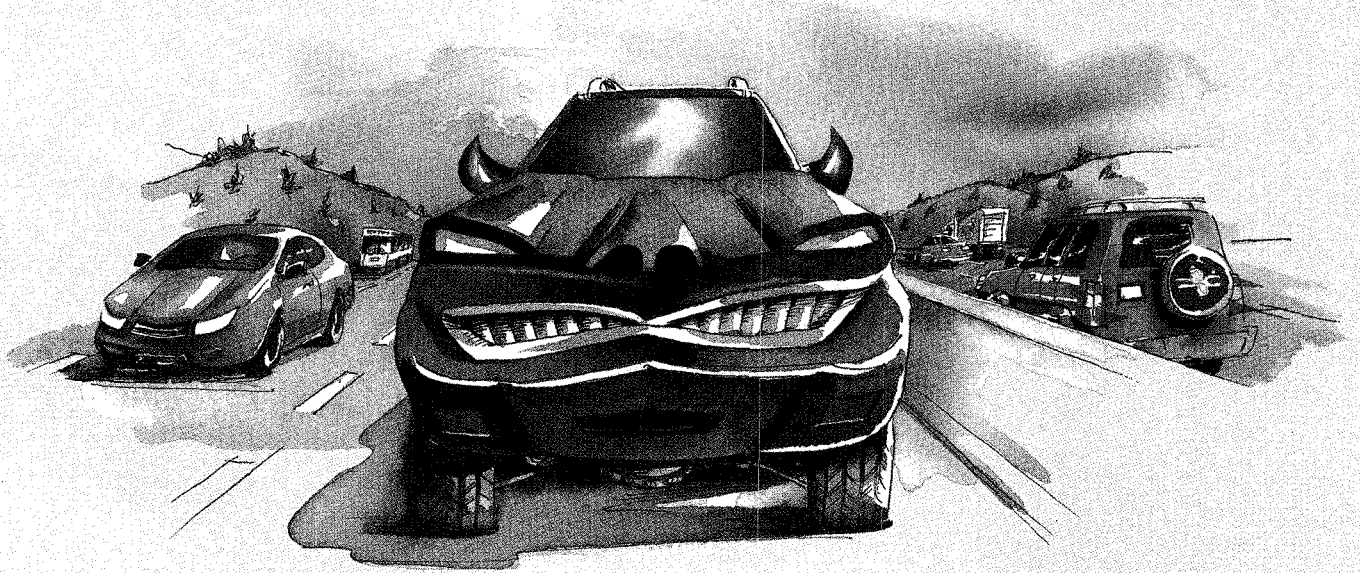


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can help them realize that smart driving is the key to keeping their licenses, their cars, their friends and their futures.

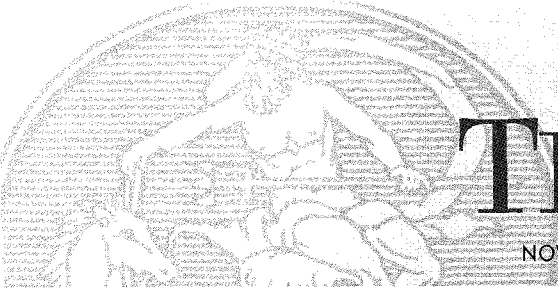
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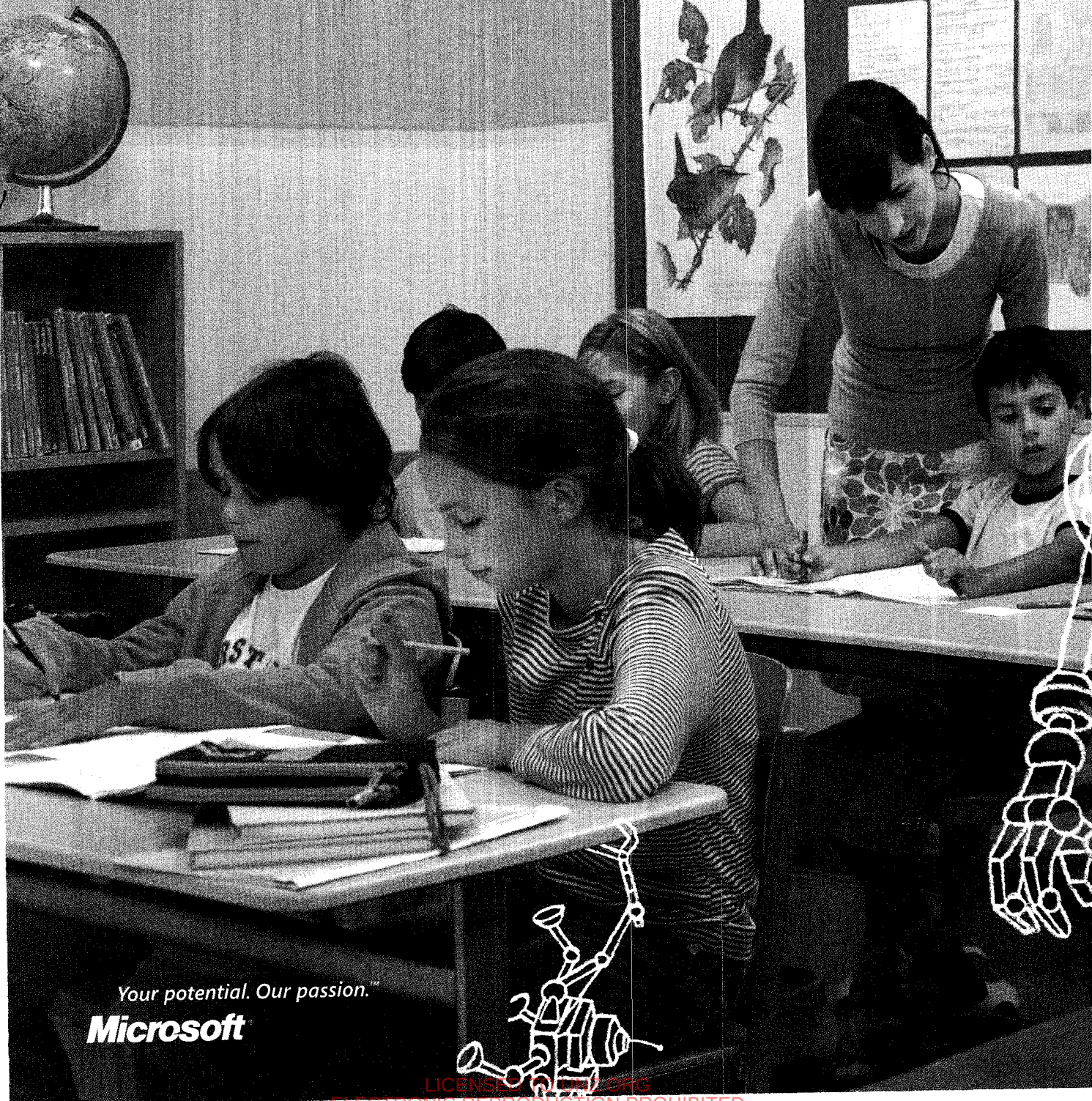
88 TWILIGHT OF THE ASSASSINS

It was the first act of airline terrorism in the Americas: thirty years ago, seventy-three people died in the bombing of a Cuban passenger plane. Now, one alleged mastermind lives freely in Miami, while another awaits trial on other charges in Texas. With Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez insisting the CIA was behind the bombing, why won't the Bush administration at last resolve enduring suspicions? A tale of thwarted dreams, frustrated justice, and murder in the sky *by Ann Louise Bardach*

47 EDUCATION *150 years of The Atlantic*

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INTERVIEW: THE INSIDE DOPE

Atlantic senior editor Joshua Green offers the lowdown on Hillary, the truth about exit polling, and thoughts on the midterm elections

INTERVIEW: BEYOND SPACE INVADERS

Jonathan Rauch, author of "Sex, Lies, and Video Games," talks about a new generation of innovative and emotionally complex video games

CONTEST: THE MOST INFLUENTIAL AMERICANS

In advance of a forthcoming feature in which a panel of scholars will select the most influential figures in American history, we invite readers to offer their own nominations



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**We think
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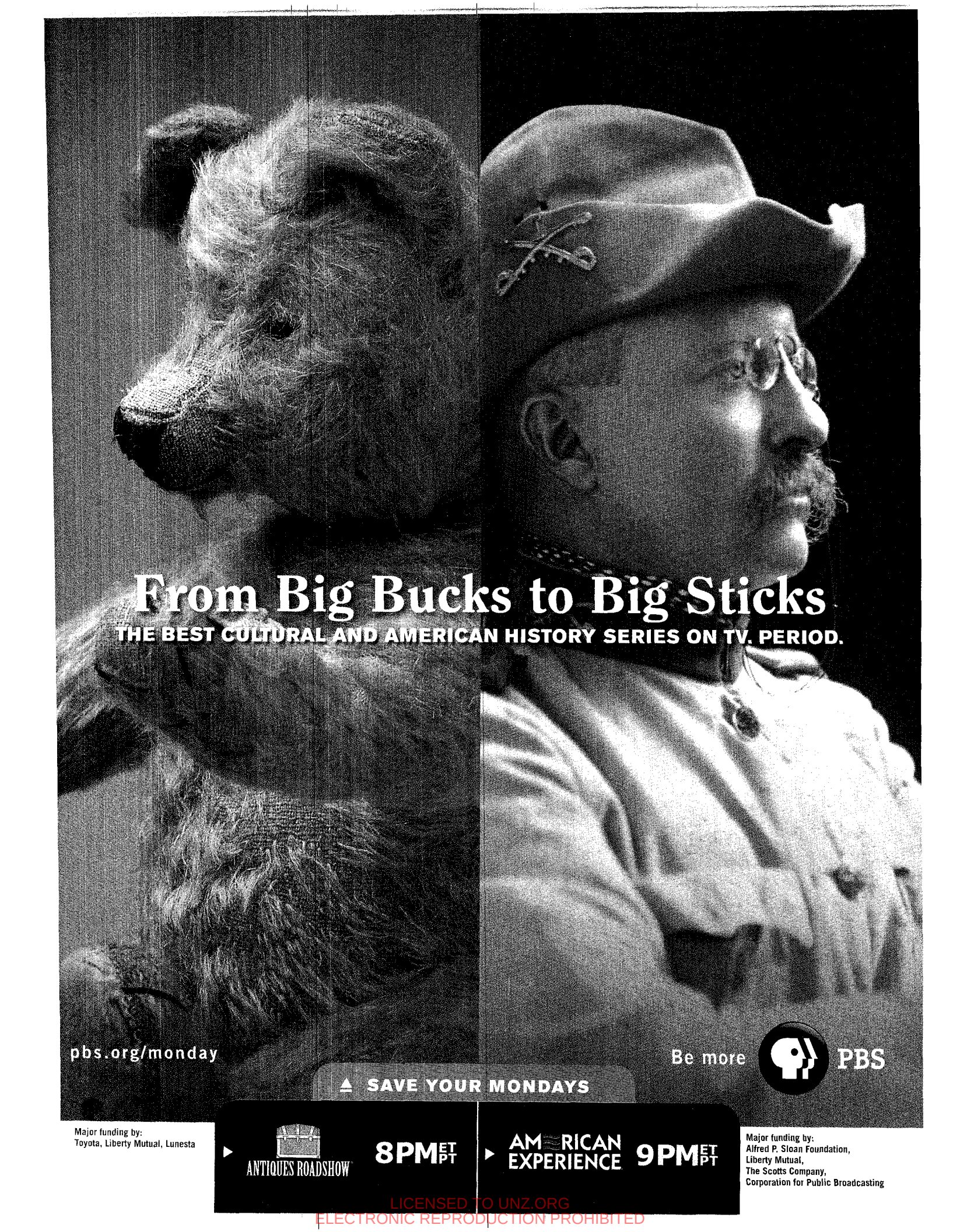
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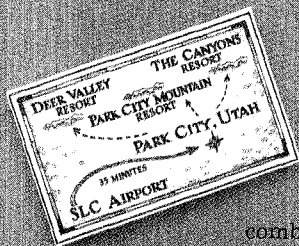
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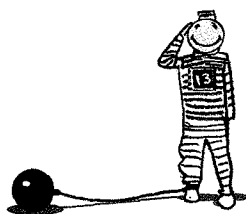
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NOVEMBER 1 Righting Wrongs

Following several high-profile exonerations of inmates, North Carolina introduces the country's first "innocence commission" today: if five of the eight commission members rule that new evidence of innocence has emerged, a three-judge panel can exonerate an inmate by unanimous assent.

NOVEMBER 1 Marching Orders

Bolivia's army has taken over the country's natural gas reserves. Today, foreign companies must submit to state control or see their wells run dry under a nationalization program set up by the new president (and Hugo Chávez ally), Evo Morales.

NOVEMBER 1 Iraq T-Shirt Ban

An Oklahoma law takes effect today banning the unauthorized use of a soldier's name or likeness on T-shirts and other merchandise. Prompted by a grieving mother whose son appeared on a T-shirt listing

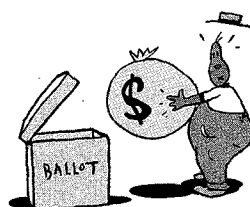
the Iraq war dead, similar laws have been proposed in other states and in Congress.

NOVEMBER 4 Episcopal Schism

When Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori becomes the world's first woman primate in the Anglican Communion today, seven of the 100 or so American dioceses are planning to break away to protest her approval of gay relationships.

NOVEMBER 7 Roe Reconsidered

South Dakota residents vote today on a sweeping state abortion ban—a direct challenge to the Supreme Court's interpretation of *Roe v. Wade* that, if approved, would reignite the judicial battle over abortion.



NOVEMBER 7 Ballot Bingo

An Arizona referendum aimed at increasing voter participation would, if approved today, award \$1 million to a random voter in future elections. (Why didn't Nevada think of this first?)

ALSO THIS MONTH: Don't Touch That Dial

Nielsen unveils a new system this month to track how many viewers actually watch television ads. Ad buyers and sellers are miffed, worried that the new system will shake up their business. Possible upside: less-annoying commercials.

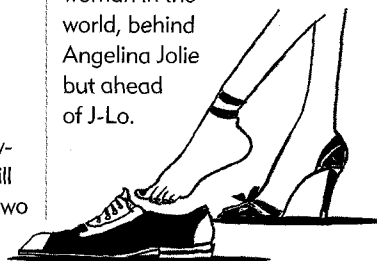


Anteing Up in Iraq

Major donors will meet late this month to hammer out a five-year economic and anticorruption plan for Iraq to satisfy the oil and financial markets. The last donor conference, in 2003 in Madrid, yielded pledges of \$13.5 billion on top of U.S. commitments—only \$3.5 billion of which has been paid.

Size Matters

Forget Yao Ming. China has gone the other way, with a nationwide call for coxswains, those tiny terrors who bark orders at rowers and steer the crew shell. The effort to stoke Olympic fever will (predictably) be televised this month as a reality show, with the two winners taking the helm of male and female crews at the 2008 Olympics in Beijing.



CALENDAR

WHAT TO WATCH FOR IN THE WEEKS AHEAD

NOVEMBER 13 Honoring King

Ground will be broken today on the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial, an arc of waterfalls and cherry trees along the National Mall's Tidal Basin, between the Jefferson and Lincoln memorials. It will be the first monument on the Mall to an individual who wasn't a U.S. president.

NOVEMBER 15 Bread Strikes Back

Beleaguered by the Atkins Diet craze, the bread industry is hoping to make a comeback. Today a winner will be crowned in the Sandwich Showdown, a national recipe contest that's part of a promotional blitz by the Grain Foods Foundation. Per capita consumption of wheat flour is stuck at 133 pounds annually, down thirteen pounds since 2000.

NOVEMBER 16 Red Hot

Ségolène Royal is leading most national polls and poised to become France's first female president—but first she'll have to get her party's nod, at this week's Socialist Party convention. Among her more attractive qualities: Royal has had the temerity to criticize the thirty-five-hour French workweek, and the lad mag *FHM* voted her—a fifty-three-year-old mother of four—the sixth-sexiest woman in the world, behind Angelina Jolie but ahead of J-Lo.

NOVEMBER 17 Spanked, Not Stirred

In its forty-fourth year, the 007 film franchise "reboots" with a film version of Ian Fleming's first James Bond novel, *Casino Royale*. From a crowded field of contenders, Daniel Craig—a blond Bond!—was chosen as the latest 007. Tougher looking than his predecessors, Craig fits the director Martin Campbell's plan to highlight the gritty misogynist of Fleming's early novels—and yes, the movie will include the book's infamous rug-beater scene.

NOVEMBER 24 Troubles on the Horizon?

The power-sharing government of Northern Ireland, created by the 1998 Good Friday Accords and frozen for the past four years after an IRA spy scandal, is in jeopardy. The parties must choose new leaders by today or Tony Blair and Bertie Ahern, the prime ministers of Britain and Ireland respectively, will take over.



NOVEMBER 30 Itchy Palms, Pleasure Domes

In its ongoing bid to outdo Kubla Khan, Dubai today opens to the public the first of three man-made palm-tree-shaped islands, which are so large they're visible from space. The smallest, the Palm Jumeirah, will support around 9,000 residences, along with hotels and entertainment venues.

—MATTHEW QUIRK



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Declaring Victory?

I have long admired and valued James Fallows's work, and so I write the following with respect and some reluctance. Mr. Fallows interviewed me over the summer for his article "Declaring Victory" (September *Atlantic*). We had a long discussion, and I provided him with a copy of a piece I had written giving an assessment of the war on terror after five years, based on what I believe al-Qaeda's current perspective is likely to be.

Mr. Fallows refers to that piece in his article, and the quotes he provides from it are rendered accurately. I would like to note for the record, however, that what I wrote in my assessment in no way supports Mr. Fallows's conclusion that "We Win." The entire thrust of the piece I wrote leads to a conclusion that is 180 degrees opposite of Mr. Fallows's—in essence, "We're losing."

With respect for Mr. Fallows and all of the experts he interviewed, I would submit that a better title for Mr. Fallows's article would have been "Whistling Past the Graveyard."

Michael F. Scheuer
Falls Church, Va.

While most of James Fallows's article makes sense, I believe he is mistaken when he states that "loose nukes" are "the one true existential threat to the United States." A reasonably well-coordinated nonnuclear attack by terrorists on this country's transportation system is feasible and would have devastating effects—subjecting millions to potential starvation, for instance. Or again, our limited number of remaining petroleum refineries constitute a target set that is vulnerable to rather crude, easily delivered nonnuclear weapons. Protecting refineries from this threat is probably impossible, and such an attack would severely damage our

consumer economy. We could expect to be returned to approximately the economic level of 1910.

James Wooster
Lake Tapps, Wash.

James Fallows makes two related arguments. First, that Americans have less to fear today from a terrorist attack than we did in September 2001; second, that our government's response to such actions poses a greater risk to our nation than the attacks themselves. In light of recent events in London, his first proposition is getting more attention. But the truth of Mr. Fallows's second point does not depend on the truth of the first; and it is the more important of the two. Why is it that we, the United States of America, persist in responding to terrorist attacks with behaviors that so obviously do not favor our survival? How have we, as a free citizenry, become so easy to manipulate into patriotic foolhardiness? And how has military action become America's first resort, instead of our last?

One possibility is that military foolhardiness is an unexpected consequence of the all-volunteer military. As our domestic economy has hollowed out, there are now fewer opportunities for making an honest living. A young American can now aspire to careers in symbol manipulation (finance, marketing, computer programming, or online poker), but rarely in manufacturing or family farming. The U.S. military—our uniformed services and our weapons industries—is the employer of choice for a growing percentage of our wage earners. Thus, we are naturally less inclined to welcome criticism or doubts about its centrality to our culture. And with no one serving against his or her will, the natural gung-ho spirit of the career military has no offsetting cynicism from the unwilling grunts and their families.

John S. Detwiler
Pittsburgh, Pa.

James Fallows demonstrates the need for caution in characterizing major events and historical eras. By declaring, repeatedly, that the United States is engaged in a "war on terror," politicians and pundits have entrenched the concept deep in the national psyche. Like the terms *Kleenex* and *Post-it*, the phrase has been "sold" as an unquestioned, official state of being.

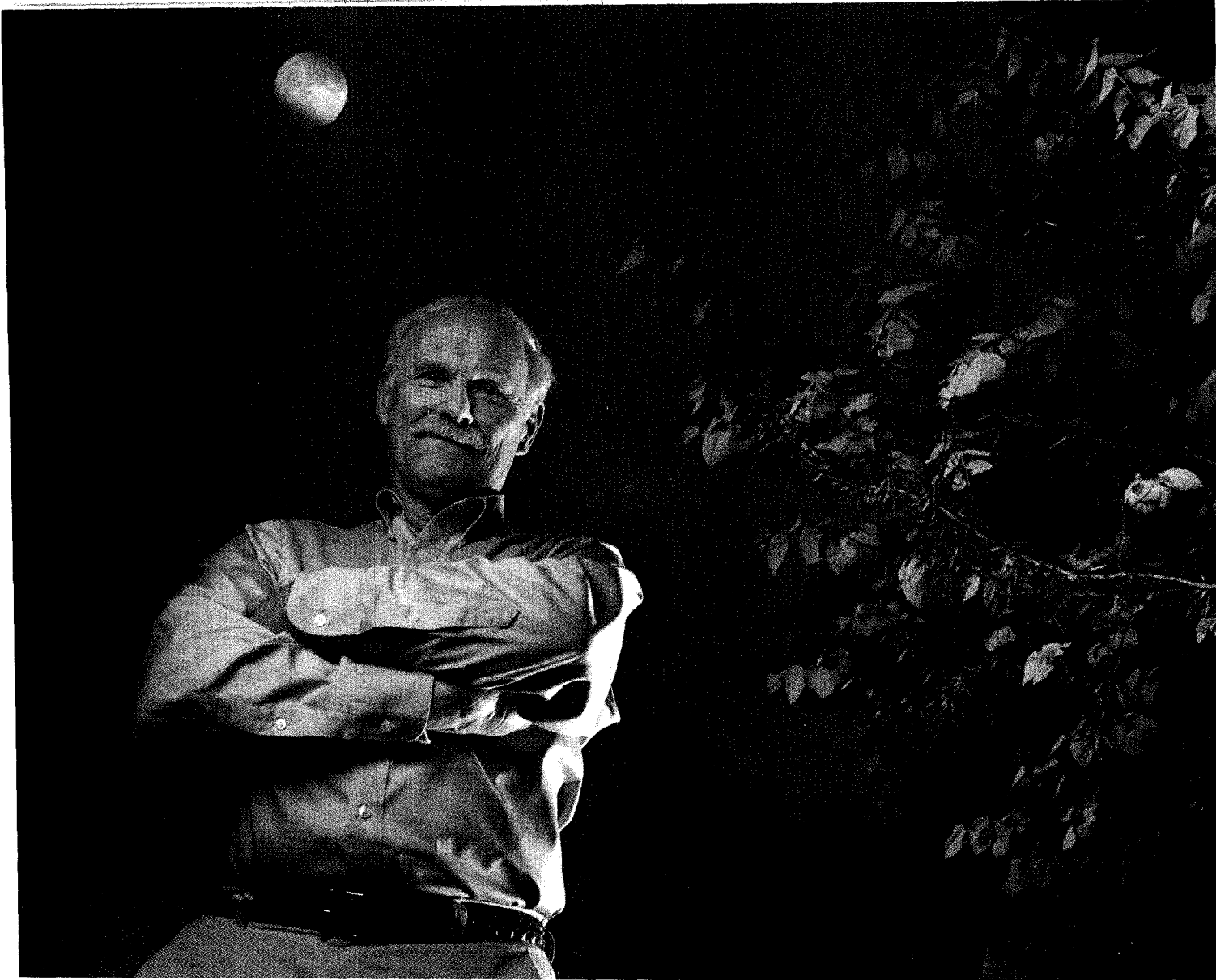
To uproot this mind-set—that is, to convince the citizenry that the war is over and that we have won—we would need a flexible, reflective, informed audience. Five years of war-talk saturation and conditioning have probably not prepared the American public for substantive change. Ordinary folks have become mentally comfortable in the familiar Cold War rut of angst and fear.

This situation requires a persuasive, credible, informed, and intelligent person who, by example, summons trust and commitment. Few leaders match that profile today. But then I remembered *An Inconvenient Truth*, and Al Gore. Is that also Fallows's thought?

Frances Monteverde
Austin, Texas

James Fallows is undoubtedly correct that the U.S. could move beyond the war-on-terror mind-set by declaring victory and putting the threat of terrorism in perspective. But this is not going to happen, at least not in the next two years. The Bush administration learned right after 9/11 how easily it could use fear to manipulate the public. It's not going to forgo a strategy that it hopes will ensure political victory in 2006 and 2008. Instead of saying that "we could use a leader to help us understand victory and its consequences," Fallows should have focused on how the leaders we have will continue to do just the opposite.

Ralph H. Brock
Lubbock, Texas



GM Gave Me A Mission To Mars

My name is Gerry Voeck. At GM, I worked on developing the technology that helped guide the Viking mission to Mars. Landing on the surface of Mars in 1975 forever changed how we view the universe. I think what GM is doing today will as well. GM's scientists have built the world's first drivable fuel cell by-wire vehicle — a high performance hydrogen propulsion system that emits only clean water vapor. Imagine that! GM is working toward cutting our dependence on petroleum, reducing emissions to nothing, and building a better performing, more powerful vehicle than ever before. Now that's an Earth shattering idea.

Gerry Voeck

Only



James Fallows replies:

*I like and respect Michael Scheuer, and his standing to speak in this field is unquestioned. As mentioned in my article, he was for years the head of the CIA's (now-abandoned) anti-bin Laden unit, and his books *Through Our Enemies' Eyes* and *Imperial Hubris* have stood up well. Of course I cannot tell him what he "really" thinks, but I believe that the full analysis presented in my article is not so totally at odds with what Mr. Scheuer has written and said.*

As a reminder, my chain of reasoning for "declaring victory" was this:

"Al-Qaeda Central" itself, the organization run by Osama bin Laden and responsible for the 9/11 attacks, has been seriously harassed and interfered with in the years since then. This reduces the risk of a devastating, large-scale assault that would amount to "another 9/11." The airline-bombing plot foiled by the British this summer actually illustrates this change. Whether or not the cell that planned the attack was directly related to al-Qaeda, British police knew about their operations for months and could disrupt them when they chose.

Around the world, "copycat" or "self-starter" groups inspired or motivated by al-Qaeda will continue to pose a serious risk, as has already been demonstrated in England, Spain, India, and elsewhere. But—as events in those same countries show—the groups do not pose an "existential" threat to those societies. Nor will they to the United States, even if and when they succeed in carrying out an attack here. Indeed in the long run the greatest menace of their terrorism is in provoking societies to destructive overreactions (for instance, the United States being provoked by 9/11 to invade Iraq, which by all accounts has become the major training ground and rallying point for anti-U.S. extremists).

Therefore the best defense against the ongoing threat from such groups is to deny them sources of support; to carefully judge our response to provocations; and to emphasize the tools of intelligence, surveillance, and penetration that have historically proven most effective against them. The first area is where, as Mr. Scheuer says, the United States is most clearly "losing," by alienating Muslims worldwide and jeopardizing its moral standing. Many of its mistakes come from excesses made more likely by the state of war (for instance,

Guantánamo detentions, perceived as an us-or-them showdown between the United States and the Islamic world). But in all areas, the concept of an open-ended "war on terrorism" has outlasted its usefulness, for reasons elaborated in the article. The U.K. bombing plot, again, was broken by patient surveillance work, not by speeches about making war on Islamic fascism.

Mr. Scheuer might still challenge this formulation. But it shows how recognition of failure in one area, and recognition of ongoing threat, can be reconciled with declaring a successful end to the original war against Al-Qaeda Central itself.

*I agree with James Wooster that non-nuclear attacks could make life difficult in America. In his excellent *Global Guerrillas* blog, John Robb (whom I mentioned in the article) has written extensively about the way such "system disruptions" allow small, weak groups to damage big, powerful targets. This underscores the importance of maintaining the right efforts to penetrate, destroy, and deter such groups.*

I also agree with John Detwiler that reliance on an all-volunteer military has been a crucial part of the political calculus of this war. Those Americans in uniform, whether on active duty or in the Reserves or National Guard, have been called on for extraordinary sacrifice over the last five years. But they represent well under 3 percent of the total U.S. population. The rest of us have not even had to pay higher taxes for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq or the larger war on terror. Practically speaking, there is no chance of restoring a military draft. But its absence obviously makes it politically easier to go to war.

As for Ralph Brock's point, over the last five years I have done all I could to examine the way "the leaders we have" made the choices they made. And to Frances Monteverde I say: the imagined presidential oration that closed the article was meant to set a general standard rather than identify a particular candidate. But if I'd had any real-world figure in mind, it would have been Dwight Eisenhower.

Picturing Tibet

Istrongly protest the caption accompanying your Photo Op ("Go West, Young Han," September *Atlantic*). The new Tibet railroad is indeed an

"engineering marvel," but at the same time a moral disaster. I have seen this railroad during its construction phase, but I have also seen the plight of the Tibetan people, who suffer under the yoke of the Chinese oppressors and who are largely denied the opportunity to benefit from this engineering marvel.

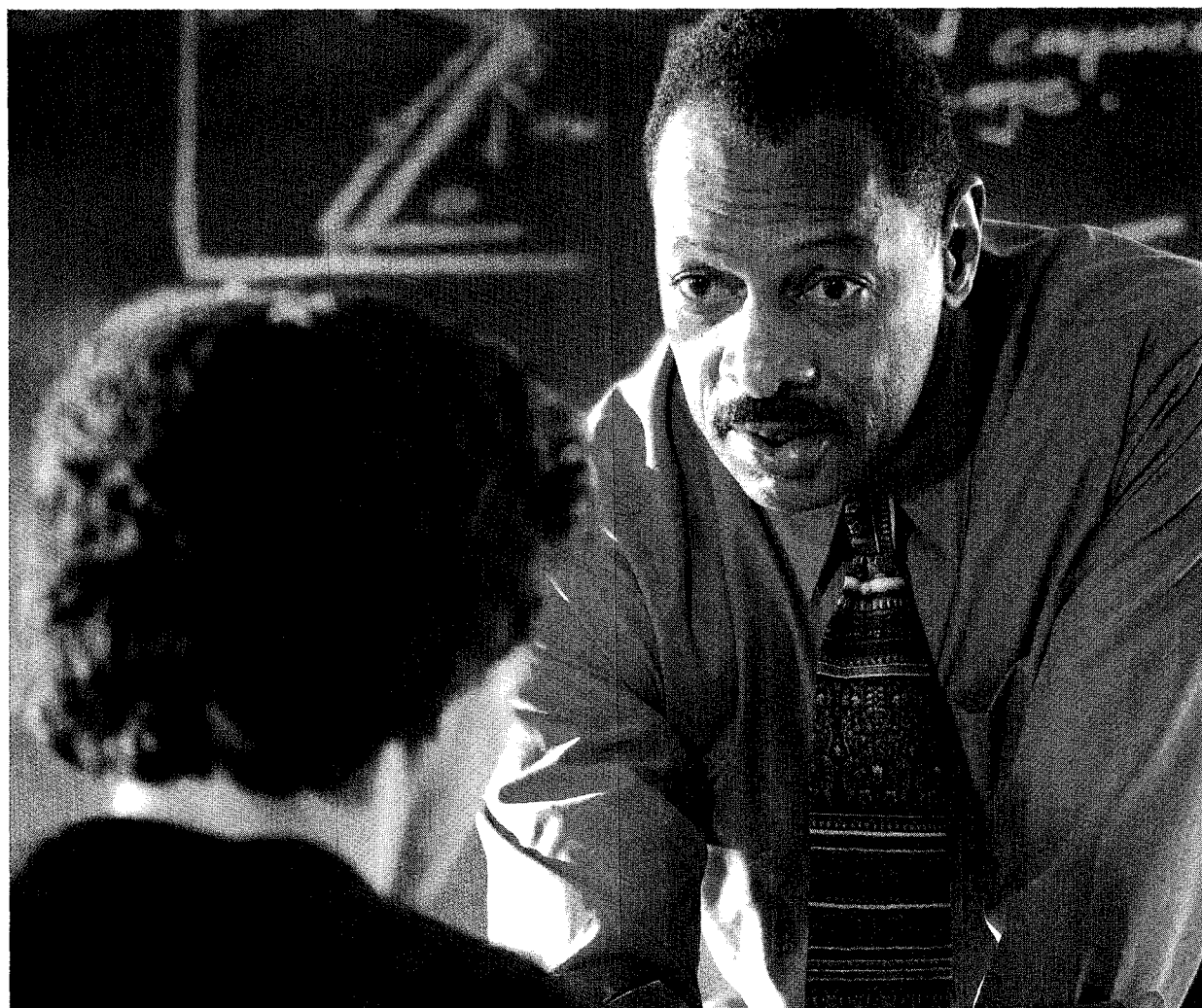
China brutally invaded Tibet and subjugated the Tibetans. The Chinese ransacked monasteries and destroyed untold volumes of Buddhist literature, sacred scriptures, and religious objects—all under the guise of "liberating" the Tibetans, but with the real intent of destroying the ancient Tibetan culture and religion. Having failed at this, they now plan to overwhelm the native society with Han immigrants, effectively perpetuating the servile status of the Tibetans. The new railroad will facilitate this strategy, and it will also allow the Chinese to mine the region's rich material deposits and transport them to the east, again without benefiting the Tibetans.

*Paul W. Rosenberger
Manhattan Beach, Calif.*

Camelot Revisited

Whatever his changes of view on other matters, concerning moderately left-of-center politicians in Britain and the United States Christopher Hitchens has been consistent. To him, they are all contemptible. For example, Neil Kinnock, Michael Foot, Bill Clinton, and John F. Kennedy have all gotten the back of his hand—in Kennedy's case ("Feckless Youth," September *Atlantic*), several times. Toward conservative politicians—Dwight Eisenhower for one, Hitchens is frequently more indulgent, giving them credit for what he considers their morally correct actions and setting aside any actions that don't conform with the picture of conservative wisdom he is trying to paint.

Readers of Hitchens's article who were not alive and sentient in the United States in the early '60s would not have the faintest inkling that John Kennedy was, in the context of his times, a liberal president. He supported breaking the House Rules Committee's power to block legislation. He supported federal aid to education,



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Medicare, and a tax cut (then supported by Keynesian liberals). He was late to civil rights, but his Justice Department, staffed with young liberals, did integrate the University of Mississippi, and he also came to support and publicly endorse civil-rights legislation far more extensive than anything Ike would have endorsed, and it was enacted after his death. He and his activist brother, Robert, came to be hated by many white southerners for these words and actions, and some southerners cheered his death. He pushed through the Test Ban Treaty. He started the Peace Corps and through his eloquence and undoubted charisma inspired a generation to enter public service (Hitchens might talk to people like Gary Hart, Chris Dodd, or John Kerry, or any one of the thousands of living Peace Corps alumni, about this quality). Perhaps they were all deluded. If so, the delusion had positive results. His views changed and matured. He was a better president in 1963 than in 1961. The jury is still out on what he would have done in Vietnam and about other matters. However, the liberal evolution of his brothers Robert and Edward after his death may give some indication of where he was headed.

Kennedy deserves the criticism he has received since his death about his sexual recklessness, his Cuba policy, his inflexible attitude toward the Cold War (though that too was arguably changing in 1963), and much else, which stern historians and freelance moralists now delight in cataloging. But any reasoned assessment of him should also take into account the actions and qualities that plunged most of the nation and the world into sincere mourning after his death in November 1963.

*Peter Connolly
Washington, D.C.*

It's Getting Hot in Here ...

I'm glad Gregg Easterbrook has finally joined the fight against global warming ("Some Convenient Truths," September *Atlantic*). But his message would have more credibility if he admitted to his long-standing role in worsening the problem he now decries.

"The only reason runaway global warming seems unstoppable is that we have not yet tried to stop it," he writes. But a big part of why the United States has waited so long to take action against global warming is that many of its citizens, government officials, and business leaders were convinced over the past fifteen years, by Easterbrook and others, that the scientific case for global warming was at best uncertain and at worst a fantasy promoted by environmentalist Chicken Littles.

It's nice that Easterbrook has finally seen the light, and I hope he's right that we can reduce global warming faster and more economically than commonly expected. But our task is much, much harder because we waited these additional fifteen years to get started. If Easterbrook wants to be heard now, he should own up to how he helped get us into this mess. Otherwise, he risks looking less like an optimist than an opportunist.

*Mark Hertsgaard
San Francisco, Calif.*

No one can seriously argue that the Earth is not warming. Yet Gregg Easterbrook joins the growing number of "catastrophards" who choose to forget what is known from history. According to a chart published by the Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change, the Earth was warmer than it is now for a period of 300 years during medieval times. At the time of the Magna Carta, 1215, the growing season in England was three weeks longer than it is today, and there was viticulture as far north as Ely. At the same time on southern and southwestern Greenland, crops were grown in sufficient quantity to support a population of about 2,000. Greenland was called "green" because that is what it was.

What caused this warm period? It certainly was not human activity. The catastrophards owe us an explanation as to why today's picture is different from the Medieval Warm Period, and why it is other than a normal fluctuation of climate, the kind of fluctuation that has previously occurred.

*Eugene J. Meyung
Charlottesville, Va.*

Gregg Easterbrook ignores the basic science in his assurances that global-warming problems are easily solved. Carbon dioxide—the main greenhouse gas—is fundamentally different from the sulfur and nitrogen pollutants causing smog and acid rain. For smog and acid rain, promising directions in which to look for fixes were obvious, whereas for carbon dioxide, no such promising direction is known. Carbon-based fuels can only produce energy by creating carbon dioxide. No carbon dioxide, no energy!

John C. Miller

Professor Emeritus, Mathematics
CUNY City College
New York, N.Y.

Gregg Easterbrook replies:

Mr. Meyung is right that the Earth has warmed and cooled many times in the past, for reasons not understood. It's also true that many diseases of the past were caused by natural forces poorly understood, but we don't say, "Therefore we should not fear new diseases today." Human activity is placing into the air large amounts of heat-trapping

gases, and nearly all science academies have in recent years concluded that the current observed climate change is caused by those emissions. The science academies could be wrong, but it is prudent to work from the assumption that they are right.

I caution Professor Miller that I did not suppose global-warming problems are "easily" solved—rather, that solutions may prove less expensive than assumed. In the 1960s, it was said that auto engines simply could not function without expelling smog-forming compounds. Now we know they can, and the control technologies required are affordable. Today engineers don't know how to build engines or power plants that burn fossil fuels without expelling carbon dioxide. If society creates a profit incentive to discover solutions, we may be pleasantly surprised.

As for Mr. Hertsgaard, I have never written anything suggesting that global warming might be "a fantasy promoted by environmentalist Chicken Littles." My 1995 book on environmental policy, A Moment on the Earth, devoted a chapter to weighing the arguments of global-warming believers and naysayers, supposed

it was impossible to know which side was right, and concluded, "Any reasonable policy that reduces the odds of climate change is more than worth the price." Fifteen years ago, a thoughtful person looking at global-warming studies might have focused on the uncertainty; at that time the National Academy of Sciences itself emphasized uncertainty. Today a thoughtful person who looks at recent science, including recent National Academy of Sciences statements, must deduce there is a danger. Mr. Hertsgaard's own work on this subject labors to divide the world into Sinister Conspirators twirling their mustaches and Noble Crusaders crying atop parapets; perhaps Mr. Hertsgaard has trouble grasping that someone can be skeptical, then be gradually persuaded by the evidence.

The Height of Inequality

It will be hard to forget the image, created by Jan Pen and recreated by Clive Crook in "The Height of Inequality" (September *Atlantic*), of the long parade of tiny low-income workers followed



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by a few mega-rich giants. Still, I have to point out that this is at its heart just a trick of statistics: Pen is juxtaposing one variable—height—which exhibits a tight variance (its graph would look a lot like the standard “bell curve” distribution of, say, SAT scores, and the numerical average would be about the same as the median), with another variable—income—which has large variance. You could get the same effect using many variables other than income. Imagine, for instance, that the parade walkers’ heights were based on number of lifetime sexual partners (Wilt Chamberlain would be quite a bit taller than even he actually was), or the number of hours each walker has spent piloting small aircraft.

The interesting question is whether a highly skewed distribution of income matters. I happen to think it does, but Crook doesn’t even get to the issue except with the throwaway “How much longer before the dwarves get restless?” line at the end of the article. Some would respond that income distribution

has always been skewed, from the time most people were peasants and a few were dukes and kings; moreover, if you arranged this parade at any time in history until very recently, 90 percent or more of the marchers would be fending off their families’ starvation, whereas today you wouldn’t have to get too far into the parade, in the United States at least, to find that most marchers own television sets and air conditioners and are battling obesity instead of starvation. The question, then, is: If the lowest-income workers have been elevated to a certain level, does it matter (beyond some primitive, envy-based response) how big the people at the other end of the parade grow?

To ask the question this way is to answer it, at least for now. Despite historical progress, the first 50 million or so American marchers don’t yet even have health insurance; some percentage of the marchers are still underfed and ill-housed, as are their children. The image of the parade is an argument for redistributive taxation and

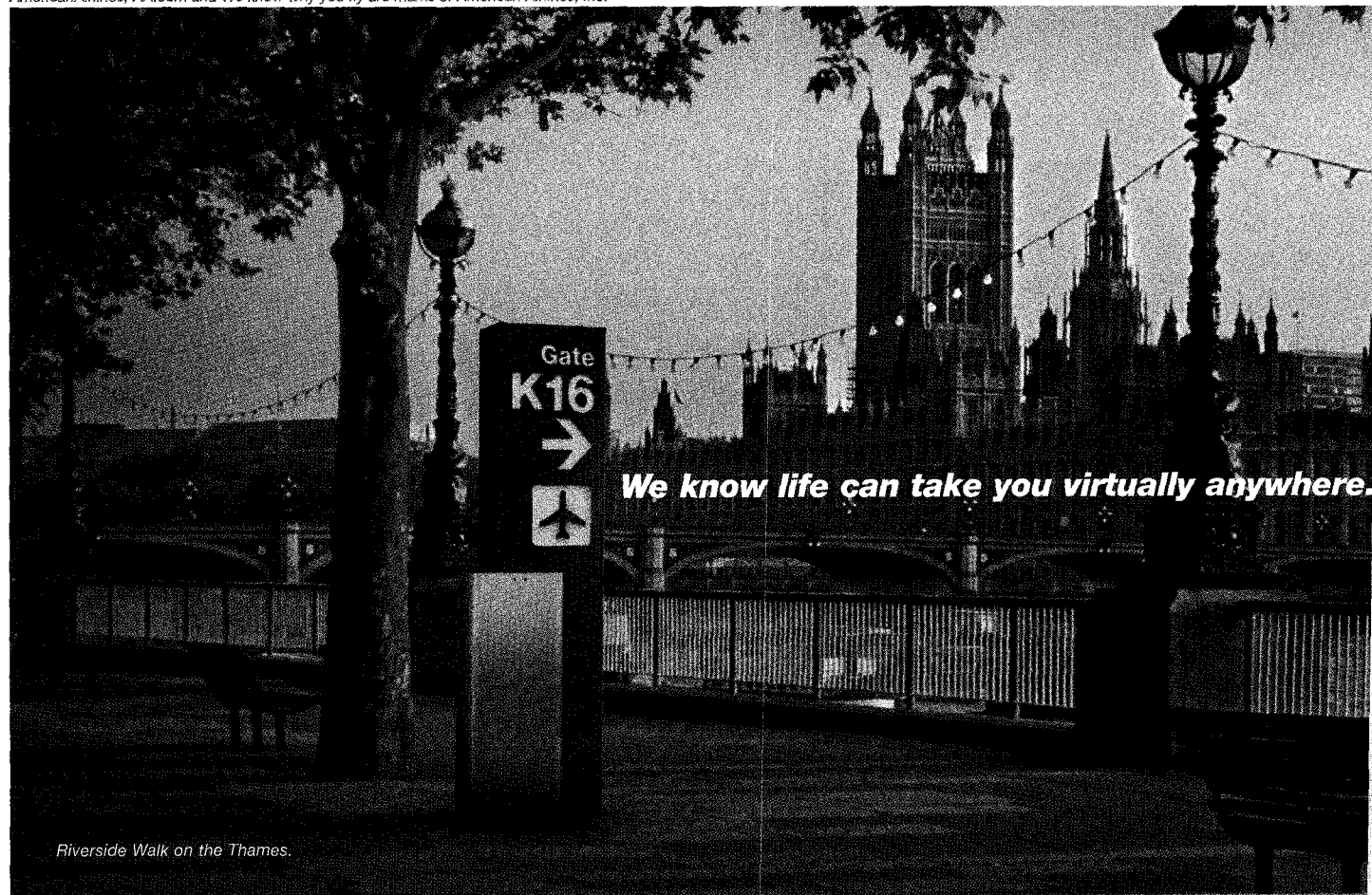
other economic policies. Only after all of the marchers are provided with some reasonably humane minimum should a few of the marchers be permitted to grow grotesquely tall.

*Andrew Stumpff-Kane
East Lansing, Mich.*

The Hive

Marshall Poe’s illuminating article on the history of Wikipedia (“The Hive,” September *Atlantic*) includes a few problems: one of style, one of fact, and (possibly) one of judgment. First, although he explains the origin of many words unfamiliar to the nonspecialized reader, such as *Wiki*, *MUD*, and *GNU*, he uses *slashdotting* without providing the origin of this term, which refers to sudden influxes of new Web-site visitors. (The technology-news Web site www.slashdot.org routinely posts articles about other Web sites and links to them; then when thousands of slashdot readers simultaneously try to link to the subject of the latest article, they

AmericanAirlines, AA.com and We know why you fly are marks of American Airlines, Inc.



Riverside Walk on the Thames.

sometimes cause the linked site to slow considerably or even crash.) Also, in Poe's outline of the history of multi-user dungeons, two of the three examples he cites are not multiple-user programs. (Zork and Myst are single-player games, though a sequel to Myst did briefly exist in a multi-user form.)

Finally, Mr. Poe's admission that he created an article about himself is likely to raise the eyebrows of Wikipedia users, as Wikipedia guidelines frown on this: the Wikipedia:Autobiography article tells would-be contributors, "Creating or editing an article about yourself is *strongly* discouraged." Since Mr. Poe says that he has been interested in Wikipedia for about two years, I can only assume that he wrote his essay to inspire discussion, debate, and further research, as any well-written Wikipedia article should, and I applaud his sly experiment in provoking Wikipedian-type behavior in the readers of *The Atlantic*.

Kate Foster
Chicago, Ill.

Marshall Poe responds:

Kate Foster is correct: Mist, not the more-famous Myst, was one of the first MUDs, and the original Zork was not a MUD, as it was a single-player game. The first MUD, however, was essentially a multiplayer version of Zork called (appropriately enough) "MUD." As for my "sly experiment," Ms. Foster gives me too much credit. When I added the "Marshall Poe" entry, I didn't know I was running afoul of the rules. I just wanted to see what would happen, and what happened persuaded me to look further into Wikipedia itself.

Upstairs, Downstairs

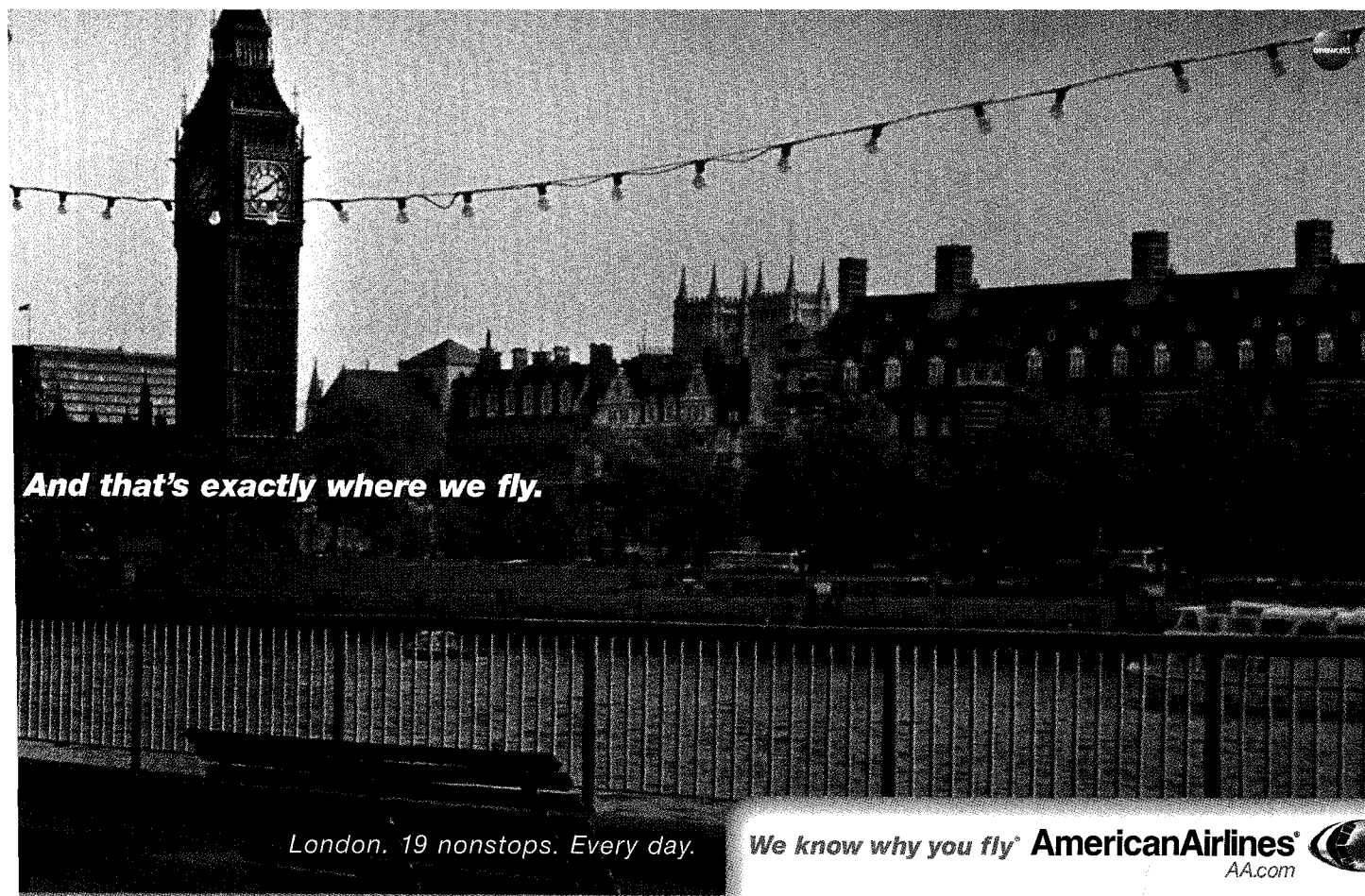
While we appreciate Sheelah Kolhatkar's description of PinnacleCare services ("Inside the Billionaire Service Industry," September *Atlantic*), we must clarify that PinnacleCare advocates are professionals, many with graduate degrees and all with many years of health-care experience. In fact, one of the two advocates Ms. Kolhatkar interviewed received her bachelor's

degree in foreign service from Georgetown University, her M.B.A. from the international business school INSEAD, and another master's degree from the Health Advocacy Master's Program at Sarah Lawrence College. The other advocate Ms. Kolhatkar met has been in the health-care field for twenty years and, among her many achievements, has developed innovative, award-winning disease-management programs.

The fact that most of our advocates are women does not mean that they are "motherly" (though compassion is a strong suit), that they "coo" (though they are persuasive and diplomatic with surgeons and hospital administrators alike), or that they extend their "claws" (though they are fiercely dedicated to getting the right health care for our members). The article's accolades were wonderful, but—as our members would agree—our advocates deserve substantially more respect.

Miles J. Varn, M.D.

Chief Medical Officer, PinnacleCare
Baltimore, Md.



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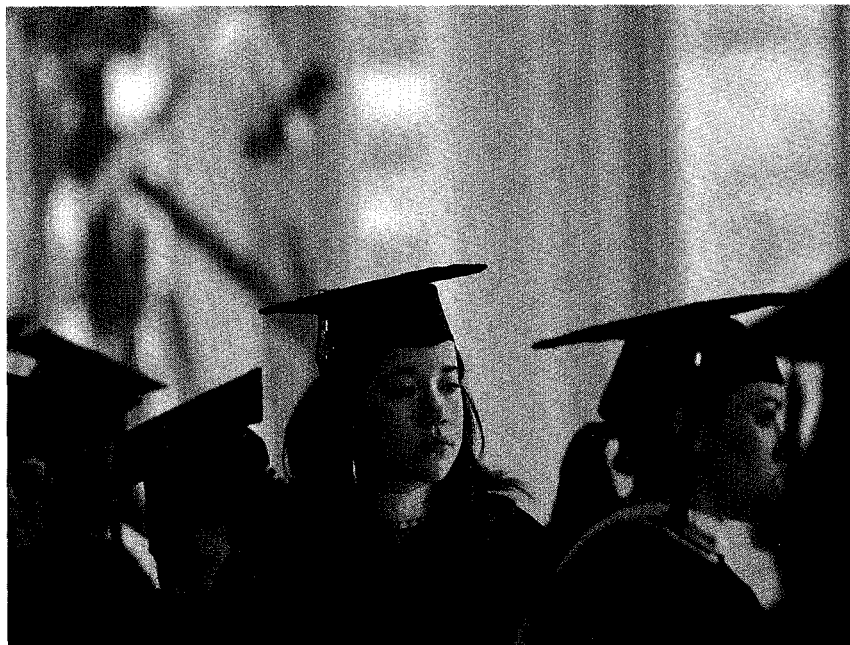
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COMMENT

A Matter of Degrees

Why college is not an economic cure-all

BY CLIVE CROOK

It is unusual nowadays to venture more than five minutes into any debate about the American economy—about widening income inequality, say, or threats to the country's global competitiveness, or the squeeze on the middle class—without somebody invoking the great economic cure-all: education. We must improve it. For a moment, partisan passions subside and everybody nods.

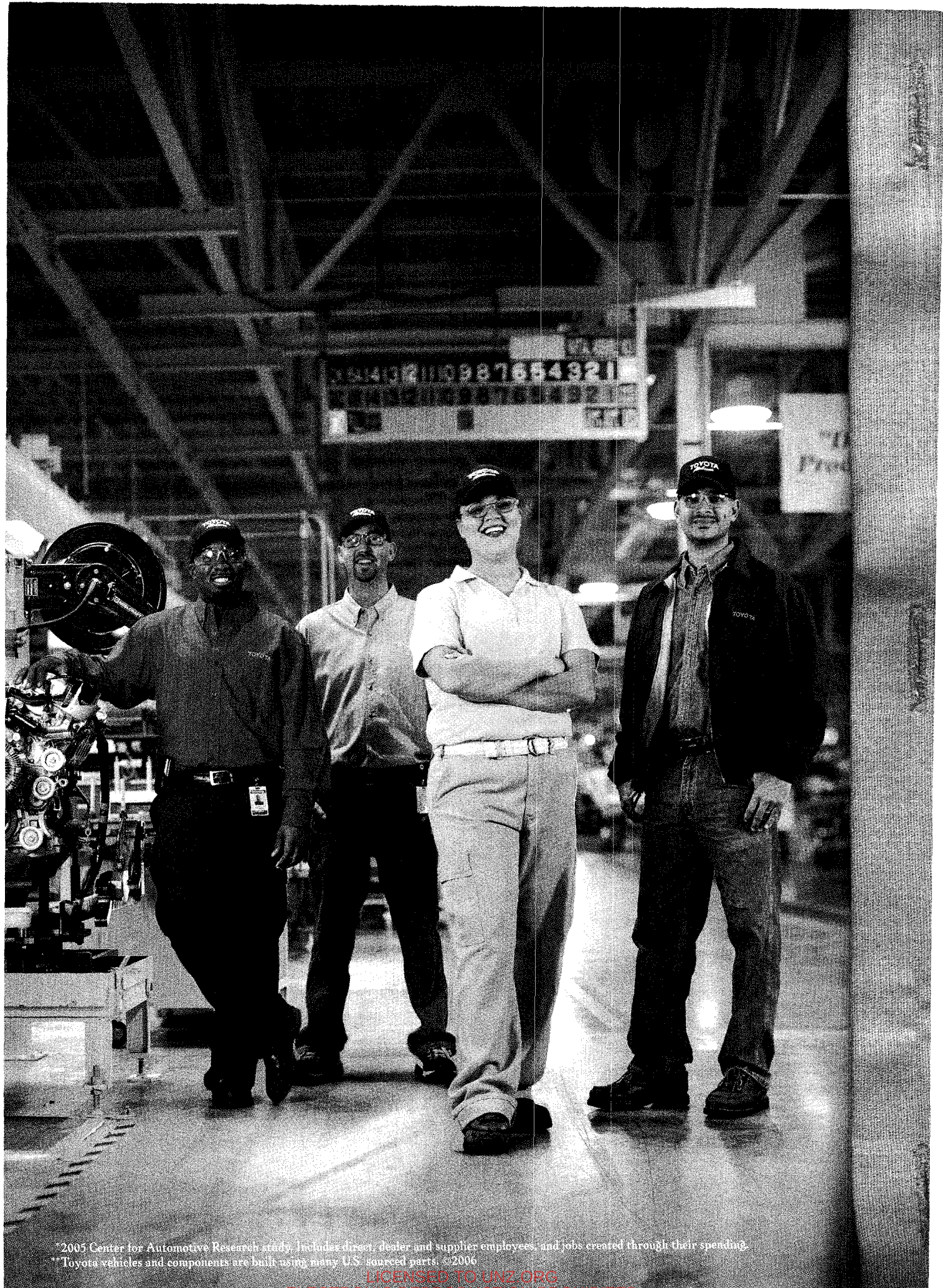
But only for a moment. How, exactly, do we improve education? Where does the problem reside—in elementary schools, high schools, or colleges? Is the answer to recruit better teachers, or to get more students moving from high school to university? Should we spend more public money? Change the way schools are organized and paid for (supporting charter schools and vouchers, per-

haps)? In no time, correctly orthogonal positions are laid down, and the quarrel resumes. But nobody challenges the importance of the issue. The centrality of education as a driver of the nation's economic prospects appears beyond dispute. [See page 52 for excerpts from 150 years of *Atlantic* education coverage.]

Yet the connections between education and economics are not as they seem. To rest the case for improving schools and colleges largely on economic grounds is a mistake. It distorts education policy in unproductive ways. And though getting education right surely matters, more is at stake than a slight increase in economic growth.

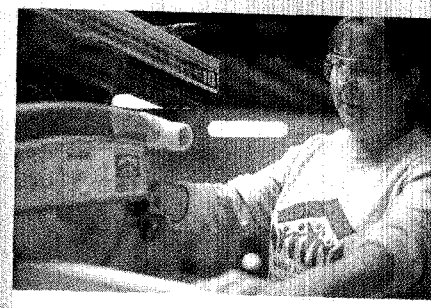
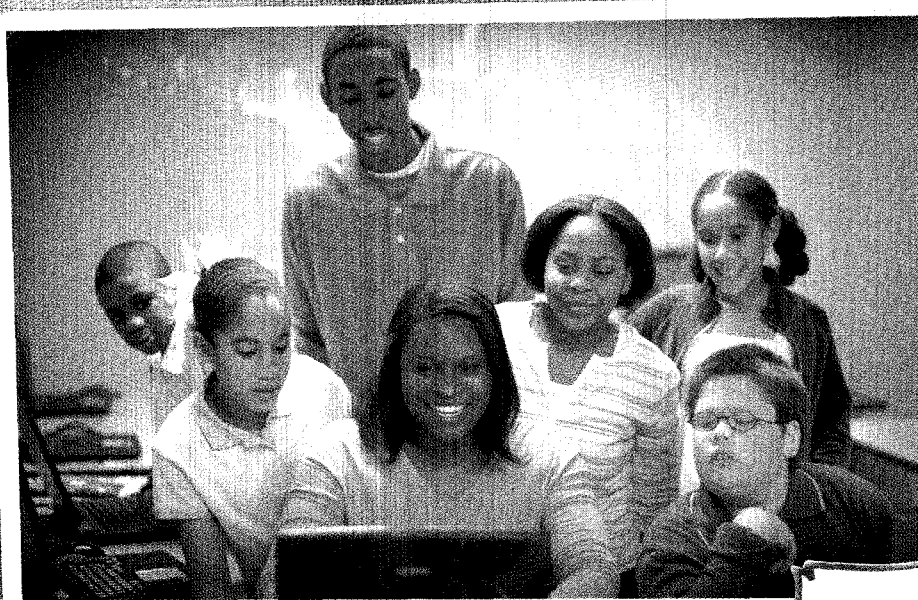
Everybody understands that, as a rule of thumb, more school means a bigger paycheck. On average, having a college

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*2005 Center for Automotive Research study. Includes direct, dealer and supplier employees, and jobs created through their spending.
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degree, rather than just a high-school degree, increases your earnings by about two-thirds. A problem arises, however, if you try to gross up these gains across the whole population. If an extra year of education equipped students with skills that increased their productivity, then giving everybody another year of school or college would indeed raise everybody's income. But take the extreme case, and suppose that the extra year brought no gain in productive skills. Suppose it merely sorted people, signaling "higher ability" to a would-be employer. Then giving an extra year of school to everybody would raise nobody's income, because nobody's position in the ordering would change. The private benefit of more education would remain, but the social benefit would be zero.

Failing to go to college did not always mark people out as rejects, unfit for any kind of well-paid employment. Increasingly, it does.

Would sending everybody to Harvard raise everybody's future income by the full amount of the "Harvard premium"? Yes, if the value of a degree from Harvard resided in the premium skills you acquired there (and if the college's classrooms could be scaled up a little). Well, ask any Harvard graduate about the teaching. The value of a degree from Harvard lies mainly in the sorting that happens during the application process. So the answer is no: if everybody went to Harvard, the Harvard premium would collapse.

In the case of an extra year of education, it need not be all or nothing; another year of study usually does impart *some* productivity-enhancing skill. But how much? A year of extra training in computer programming presumably has a direct material value. An extra year spent learning medieval history might improve a student's intellectual self-discipline and ability to think analytically, but has lower material utility: nobody studies feudal land grants for the boost to lifetime earnings. So aggregated figures such as the proportion of high-school graduates going on to college—a number that is constantly cited and compared internationally—tell you very little.

Totting up college matriculations as a way of measuring national success is doubly ill-conceived if the signaling function flips over, so that a college education becomes the norm, and college nonattendance is taken to mean "unfit for most jobs."

In 2004, 67 percent of American high-school graduates went straight on to college, compared with just under half in 1972. This is widely applauded. It looks like progress—but is it really? Failing to go to college did not always mark people out as rejects, unfit for any kind of well-paid employment. But now, increasingly, it does. In a cruel paradox, this may be one reason why parental incomes better predict children's incomes in the United States than they used to—in other words, one reason why

America is becoming less meritocratic. A college degree has become an expensive passport to good employment, one for which drive and ability less often can substitute, yet one that looks unaffordable to many poor families.

Many occupations are suffering from chronic entry-requirement inflation. Hotels, for instance, used to appoint junior managers from among the more able, energetic, and presentable people on their support or service staff, and give them on-the-job training. Today, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, around 800 community and junior colleges offer two-year associate degrees in hotel management. In hotel chains, the norm now is to require a four-year bachelor's or master's degree in the discipline.

For countless other jobs that once required little or no formal academic training—preschool teacher, medical technician, dental hygienist, physical-therapy assistant, police officer, paralegal, librarian, auditor, surveyor, software engineer, financial manager, sales manager, and on and on—employers now look for a degree. In some of these instances, in some jurisdictions, the law requires one. All of these occupations are, or soon will be, closed to

nongraduates. At the very least, some of the public and private investment in additional education needs to be questioned.

To be sure, today's IT-driven world is creating a genuine need for some kinds of better-educated workers. It is the shortage of such people, according to most politicians and many economists, that is causing the well-documented rise in income inequality. Both to spur the economy and to lessen inequality, they argue, the supply of college graduates needs to keep rising.

It seems plausible, but this theory too is often overstated, and does not fit the facts particularly well. The college wage premium rose rapidly for many years, up to the late 1990s. Since then it has flattened off, just when the pace of innovation would have led you to expect a further acceleration. An even more awkward fact is that especially in the past decade or so, rising inequality has been driven by huge income increases at the very top of the distribution. In the wide middle, where differences in educational attainment ought to count, changes in relative earnings have been far more subdued. During the 1990s, CEO salaries roughly doubled in inflation-adjusted terms. But median pay actually went up more slowly than pay at the bottom of the earnings distribution, and even pay at the 90th percentile (highly educated workers, mostly, but not CEOs) increased only a little faster than median wages. Today, shortages of narrowly defined skills *are* apparent in specific industries or parts of industries—but simply pushing more students through any kind of college seems a poorly judged response.

The country will continue to need cadres of highly trained specialists in an array of technical fields. In many cases, of course, the best place to learn the necessary skills will be a university. For many and perhaps most of us, however, university education is not mainly for acquiring directly marketable skills that raise the nation's productivity. It is for securing a higher ranking in the labor market, and for cultural and intellectual enrichment. Summed across society, the first of those purposes cancels out. The second does not. That is why enlightenment, not productivity, is the chief social justification for four years at college.

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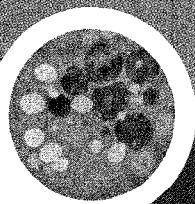


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Shoving ever more people from high school to college is not only of dubious economic value, it is unlikely to serve the cause of intellectual enrichment if the new students are reluctant or disinclined. Yet there are still large prizes to be had through educational reform—certainly in enlightenment and perhaps in productivity. They simply lurk farther down the educational ladder.

The most valuable attribute for young people now entering the workforce is adaptability. This generation must equip itself to change jobs readily, and the ability to retrain, whether on the job or away from the job, will be crucial. The necessary intellectual assets are acquired long before college, or not at all. Aside from self-discipline and the capacity to concentrate, they are preeminently the core-curriculum skills of literacy and numeracy.

Illiteracy has always cut people off from the possibility of a prosperous life, from the consolations of culture, and from full civic engagement. In the future, as horizons broaden for everybody else, people lacking these most basic skills will seem even more imprisoned. The most recent National Assessment of Adult Literacy found that 30 million adult Americans have less than basic literacy (meaning, for instance, that they find it difficult to read mail, or address an envelope). Three out of ten seniors in public high schools still fail to reach the basic-literacy standard. Progress on literacy would bring great material benefits, of course, for the people concerned and some benefits for the wider economy—but those benefits are not the main reason to make confronting illiteracy the country's highest educational priority.

In addressing the nation's assorted economic anxieties—over rising inequality, the stagnation of middle-class incomes, and the fading American dream of economic opportunity—education is not the longed-for cure-all. Nor is anything else. The debate about these issues will have to range all across the more bitterly disputed terrains of public policy—taxes, public spending, health care, and more. It is a pity, but in the end a consensus that blinds itself to the complexity of the issues is no use to anyone. ▀

Clive Crook is a senior editor at The Atlantic.

BRIEF LIVES

Ears Wide Shut

For more than a year, Karen Hughes has been trying to sell George Bush's America to the Middle East. Here's why it isn't working

BY ILANA OZERNOY

Toward the close of her recent "listening tour" in Morocco, Karen Hughes and her entourage of staffers, translators, and security agents barreled into Settat, an industrial town off the highway to Marrakech. The six-car convoy roared down the empty, palm-lined avenues, then halted in front of Moulay Ismail Middle School, where a party at a computer center built by USAID dollars was already under way. Hip-hop music crackled through the sound system, a few decibels too loud. A woman whooped Berber tribal songs at a gaggle of bouncing children in the shade of the schoolyard's orange grove. In the driveway, a line of local dignitaries stood grinning, some dabbing at their perspiring foreheads with handkerchiefs.

Bounding out of the ambassador's bulletproof BMW in a cherry-red jacket and sensible shoes, Hughes beelined for the crowd. By the time her coterie caught up, the six-foot-tall Texan was deep in the throng, shaking hands, hugging women, and picking up babies to kiss for the camera, all the while juggling a pocketbook that held, among other things, an Eyewitness Travel Guide to Morocco and a small stack of note cards with a stump speech typed in large block letters. As one of Hughes's aides had told me earlier on the trip, "This ain't her first rodeo."

Indeed it ain't. Following a stint as a television reporter in Dallas/Fort Worth, Hughes became the Texas press coordinator for the 1984 Reagan-Bush campaign and then orchestrated George W. Bush's election as governor in 1994, serving as his director of communications. When Bush ran for president in 2000, Hughes became known as much for her ability to read her boss's mind as for her steely message control. "That's her shtick—I know the president better than anyone else," a former administration official said of Hughes. "She has an innate ability to mimic the sentiments and intellect

of the president." By the time she left the White House in 2002 to return to Texas with her family (and write a tell-nothing memoir, *Ten Minutes From Normal*, which one reviewer called a "campaign brochure between hard covers"), an *Esquire* profile gushed that Hughes was "the most powerful woman in America."

On the heels of Bush's appointment of Condoleezza Rice as secretary of state, his decision to bring Hughes back to Washington as his undersecretary of state for public diplomacy, in the spring of 2005, was seen as a sign that he recognized that the United States, mired in an increasingly unpopular war and buffeted by revelations of military abuses and atrocities, had a severe global image problem. What better person to sell the administration's values and policies than the confidant who had helped make a "compassionate conservative" out of a governor who once joked about an execution, had spun his legendary twisted syntax as just-plain-folks straight talk, and had beaten back the attacks of his opponents in two presidential elections?

Public diplomacy has long been the stuff of softball politics. But after Edward R. Murrow took over the U.S. Information Agency in 1961, he famously declared, "If they want me in on the crash landings, I better damn well be in on the takeoffs," meaning he wanted public diplomacy to have a seat at the policy table. And for much of the Cold War, public diplomacy—from Duke Ellington's touring jazz orchestras to English classes and movie nights at American cultural centers—was an important weapon in the U.S. policy arsenal. (At its height in 1989, USIA's annual budget hit \$882 million—almost one-quarter the size of the State Department's budget at the time, and about \$1.4 billion in today's dollars.) But by the fall of the Berlin Wall, the need for propaganda had ostensibly eased.



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Karen Hughes dances with teenage Moroccan rappers in Marrakech.

In 1999, after years of budget cuts, the emaciated agency was folded into the State Department. The merger is still remembered there as *The Murder*.

Enter Hughes—brash, forceful, the most inside of Bush insiders. Hughes not only had the ear of the president; as his longtime consigliere, she also had a seat at the policy table that predecessors like Murrow could only have dreamed about. When I joked to one former senior State Department official that Hughes was a virtual Condi No. 2, the official shot back, completely deadpan, “Are you kidding? She’s No. 1.”

A few months after Hughes took up her job as undersecretary, the Bush administration put her in charge of formulating and coordinating all “strategic communication” for the Department of State, the Department of Defense, the National Security Council, the White House, and other executive branch entities. Her new job, Hughes told me, is to be “the conductor of the big orchestra that is the federal government.” Her biggest brainchild is a “rapid-response unit,” which operates much like a political campaign’s war room. Every morning, underlings dig through top stories in the world media. Then, in response, Hughes’s office puts out a pithy two-page memo with talking points for anyone who might speak for America that day, from the U.S. ambassador in Beijing to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

Hughes has also talked of plans “to forward-deploy regional SWAT teams” to spread the administration’s message, including regional hubs with Arabic speakers to appear on Al-Jazeera and other influential outlets. To support these and other more traditional public-diplomacy initiatives, Hughes is pushing to increase the budgets for public diplomacy and visitor exchanges next year to almost \$825 million.

The larger goal of Hughes’s muscular efforts at message control is twofold: to offer a positive vision of America and, as Hughes put it in a talk to State Department employees, “to isolate and marginalize the extremists.” But curiously, even Hughes seems to recognize that such efforts at outreach have their limits—and that what falls outside those limits apparently includes one of the prickliest issues on the U.S. public-diplomacy agenda. “I don’t think we’re going to change any minds about Iraq at all for years,” Hughes told me. “Until we succeed, there’s nothing I can say to change people’s minds.”

After Condoleezza Rice announced Hughes’s nomination, Hughes made a point of noting that she was eager “to listen and to learn” from people in other countries. Having been born in Paris and having spent time in Canada and Panama, she said, had given her “firsthand” experience of how

American policies can be interpreted differently in other countries. But notwithstanding kindergarten in Ontario and a few years of school in the sheltered precincts of the Panama Canal Zone (where her father was then lieutenant governor), her first listening tour to the Middle East in September 2005 quickly went off script: in one memorable encounter, Saudi women challenged Hughes’s assumption that they craved the same freedoms as their American sisters. In the aftermath, Hughes took public diplomacy private, and trimmed back her overseas press contingents.

Then, slowly and cautiously, she began to relax. On this recent trip to Morocco, with me and an AP reporter sometimes in tow, Hughes played basketball with underprivileged kids in a Casablanca slum, shopped for carpets in the souks of Marrakech, and danced along to Moroccan hip-hop with the country’s most popular teenage rappers.

Yet for all her protestations that she was in Morocco “to listen and to learn,” Hughes seemed to be there to talk. She talked about herself as a working mom. She talked about choosing freedom over tyranny. “Tell me what we can do better,” she said to a group of Moroccan business leaders, in a discussion about bridging the cultural gap. Soon, though, Hughes offered her own answer. “I keep thinking we need to do a reality-TV show of a Moroccan family living in America! Let’s make this happen!”

More often than not, the burden seemed to be on her audience, not Hughes, to be the better listener. When a student asked Hughes at a cultural center in Casablanca what difficulties Hughes faced, she paused and then said, “Misunderstanding.” She went on to explain, “We’re a very diverse and tolerant country, but people don’t see us that way. They think we’re very arrogant, and they get that from the movies and TV coverage they watch.” Then she added, “At a time of war, at a time we’re trying to liberate the people of Iraq from a horrible dictator, it’s really hard to convey what America is like.” Later, at the middle school in Settat, Hughes zeroed in on a young girl in a *hejab*, who had put together a presentation on fighting terrorism. Hughes pulled up a chair

AP PHOTO/JAIL BOUNHAR

and, as Moroccan photographers and cameramen circled, made a show of taking notes while the girl, working with a translator, went through her slides. "I wish I spoke Arabic! I need to learn it! But maybe I'm a little too old to learn!" Hughes teased. The girl smiled weakly. She appeared not to get the joke.

Part of Hughes's past political strength has been her ability to connect with average Americans and communicate the president's policies in terms they understand. But foreign audiences don't necessarily think the same way, and they haven't responded as favorably to her bootstrap bluntness, folksy charm, and anecdotes about being a mother. When I asked Hughes midway through the trip, and then again at the end, what she had heard and what she had learned, she skirted the issue, saying things like, "I did TV so they saw an American official on TV, and that's important. But in the long run, the thing that really fosters understanding is people-to-people contact." Part evasion, part bromide, that response seems of a piece with her willingness to write off any real effort to win hearts and minds on the question of Iraq. It also seems to ignore the obvious benefits that emanate from any conversation, one to one or millions to millions, in which each side feels the other is listening, not just talking.

Partway through the trip, Ambassador Thomas Riley hosted a dinner at Villa America, his residence in Rabat. Handpicked from Morocco's elite, the guests were what Hughes called "key influencers." According to Aboubakr Jamaï, a prominent local editor who attended the dinner, Hughes, draped in a bronze caftan borrowed from the ambassador's wife, largely stuck to the same talking points she had used during the trip. Her audience smiled and stuck to being polite. As Jamaï told me the next day, "We got very little time with her, and I saw people who are very critical of the administration saying crazy things about how beautiful America is." For his part, Jamaï concluded it was a waste of time. When the dinner was over, both he and Hughes went back out into the Moroccan night, armed with the same opinions they had brought to the table. ■

Ilana Ozernoy is an associate editor at The Atlantic.

WASHINGTON

Do Polls Still Work?

The last two elections have left pollsters somewhat bloodied but unbowed

BY JOSHUA GREEN

May I be the first to say "Mr. President?" inquired Bob Shrum, rather too memorably, of John Kerry on Election Day 2004, as early exit polls showed his candidate cruising to victory. It turned out Shrum's faith was misplaced—so badly that the episode ranks alongside "Dewey Defeats Truman" in the annals of Great Political Embarrassments.

After faulty reading of exit polls caused the Election Day 2000 debacle, this latest confusion suggested a deep futility in even trying to gauge public opinion, before or after an election.

With this month's elections shaping up to be another nail-biter, the question "Do polls still work?" is increasingly practical. Pollsters no longer seem like wizards. It's no secret that today they must contend with skyrocketing refusal rates and obstacles like "cell-phone-only households." So partisans feel free to criticize them—especially when their side is losing.

The last election season saw oddly technical attacks: the liberal group MoveOn.org attacked the Gallup organization in *The New York Times* over its "likely voter methodology." And startlingly vehement ones: Republicans picketed the Minneapolis *Star Tribune*, pounding on windows and hollering at employees, for insufficiently weighting conservatives in its survey samples.

Pollsters themselves freaked out. Contrary to their partisan caricature, legitimate practitioners of the calling are a docile and introverted breed consumed with little beyond their own narrow specialties. If you don't know one, a good example is William Hurt's character in *Altered States*—the rumpled academic so engrossed in his research that he fails to notice when his marathon stints in a sensory-deprivation tank transform him into a rampaging man-beast.

The polling community reached for its heavy artillery: the strongly worded journal article. Last year, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, the premier journal in the field,

devoted a special issue to an autopsy of the 2004 preelection polls, and proved the naysayers wrong. The studies found that the polls had been among the most accurate in half a century, and concluded that blame for the mess lay elsewhere: reporters—always suckers for drama—had treated statistically insignificant day-to-day shifts as major stories rather than predictable aberrations, thereby heightening the up-one-day, down-the-next whiplash effect that tends to undermine confidence in any poll. No wonder the public was angry! For all the criticism, one author observed, most polls "were among the best recorded in the contemporary period." Gallup's last poll gave Bush a 2-point lead; he won by 2.5 percent. It was, as the issue's coeditor, Lawrence Jacobs, put it, "a kick to the groin of conventional myths about polling."

And what about Bob Shrum and the exit polls? As a series of postelection studies took pains to note, the self-styled experts drastically misread the raw exit-poll data that leaked on Election Day. Instead of seizing on the early numbers and declaring a winner, experts now tell us, bloggers and the press should have waited for all the data to be properly weighted and balanced.

The National Election Pool—the outfit that runs the exit polls—has made one useful concession to reality and set out to stop leaks from racing across the Web, hitting upon an ingeniously low-tech solution to a high-tech problem. This year the pollsters will be placed in a "quarantine room" and stripped of cell phones, pagers, Internet access, and other means of outside communication. They won't be allowed back into the electronic real world until many hours later.

If all goes according to plan—and if the pollsters locked in the tank don't turn into rampaging man-beasts—the results we hear later that evening will be as accurate as they should be. ■

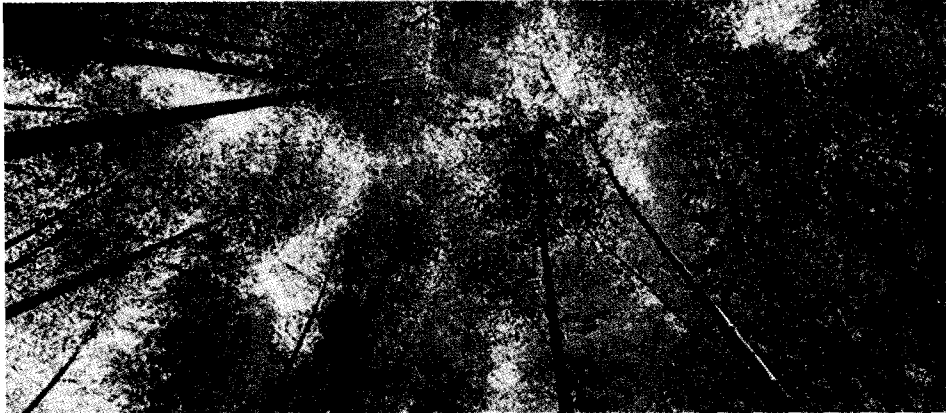
Joshua Green is a senior editor at The Atlantic.



Fertile Ground

An Afghan farmer and his son survey a poppy field. The opium harvest in Afghanistan hit a record high this year, outstripping last year's crop by nearly 50 percent. Widespread poppy cultivation is both a product and a cause of the erosion of central government control, and has been linked to the rising intensity of the Taliban insurgency.

PHOTO BY AHMAD MASOOD/REUTERS



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POLL

AMERICA AND ISRAEL

The Atlantic recently asked a group of foreign-policy authorities about current and future U.S. support for Israel

Q How would you describe U.S. support for Israel under the Bush administration?

62% TOO STRONG

"The Bush administration ... believes that the only way to demonstrate America's commitment to Israel's security is to unquestioningly back all of its policies. That belief is profoundly mistaken. No one questions America's commitment to Israel's security—but that does not mean that America must support Israel's illegal settlement policy, [or] its counterproductive use of force in the West Bank, Gaza, or Lebanon ... Ultimately, nothing threatens Israeli security more than America's uncritical support of unwise Israeli policies."

"Obviously, the United States must stand foursquare with Israel as one of the very few established democracies in the region, and our closest ally there. We have now become so closely identified with Israel, however, that we may actually be hurting Israel's longer-range interests. Our 'honest broker' role is diminished, and we therefore have less clout with Israel's foes and less capability to moderate violence directed at Israel."

"The Bush administration has chosen to treat Middle East diplomacy as a zero-sum game, in which gains by Syria, Iran, Hezbollah, or Hamas are by definition American losses, and vice versa. The result, of course, is that the United States always loses, because if you insist that the [people] of the region choose between Syria, Iran, Hezbollah, and Hamas, on the one hand, and the United States and Israel, on the other, they are going to choose the other side every time."

"We have lost our leverage on conflict resolution by becoming identified solely with one side."

"[The U.S.] has been too uncritical—as in Lebanon—which doesn't help the U.S.-Israeli alliance at all. Friends don't let friends drive drunk."

38% ABOUT RIGHT

"9/11 gave the president and many Americans the thought that we are fighting the same war that Israel is fighting against jihadist extremists. This is not to say that Israel's war doesn't also have elements unique to Israel; it does. So does the jihadist war against us have elements that don't directly apply to Israel. But overall, there's a sense that we're in the same boat."

0% NOT STRONG ENOUGH

Q How do you think U.S. support for Israel will change over the next decade?

68% IT WILL STAY ABOUT THE SAME

"I think U.S. support is likely to remain more or less the same rhetorically. However, as our power and influence in the region bleed away, Israel will not find our support as reassuring as in the past."

"Across [almost the entire] political spectrum, America's politicians and people support Israel strongly, giving a steadiness to U.S. policy. The ongoing struggle against Islamic extremism will also help align U.S. policy with that of Israel."

30% IT WILL DECREASE SIGNIFICANTLY

"U.S. power will diminish globally and in the Middle East. As that occurs, we will be forced to be more critical and strategic in our relations with Israel in order to advance the broad spectrum of our interests. Today's almost unquestioning support is not sustainable."

"There simply is no policy alternative to greater engagement with the Arab world—and I don't mean more invasions. Ties [between America and the Arab world], now at an all-time low, will grow [stronger and more numerous]. So Israel, while remaining important, will be relatively less so."

3% IT WILL INCREASE SIGNIFICANTLY

"The threats to Israel are increasing, as [Iran's nuclear-arms program progresses] and the radicalization of the Middle East continues. The question is less the narrow issue of support for Israel as such [and more] whether the U.S. can develop and pursue an effective strategy that contains and eventually diminishes those [same] threats—out of its own national interest."

PARTICIPANTS (39): Ronald Asmus, Samuel Berger, Daniel Blumenthal, Stephen Bosworth, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Daniel Byman, Warren Christopher, Eliot Cohen, Ivo Daalder, James Dobbins, Lawrence Eagleburger, Douglas Feith, Jay Garner, Leslie Gelb, Marc Grossman, John Hamre, Gary Hart, Bruce Hoffman, John Hulsman, Robert Hunter, Tony Judt, Robert Kagan, David Kay, Andrew Krepinevich, Charles Kupchan, John Lehman, James Lindsay, Edward Luttwak, John McLaughlin, William Nash, Joseph Nye, Carlos Pascual, Thomas Pickering, Kenneth Pollack, Joseph Ralston, Susan Rice, Wendy Sherman, Anne-Marie Slaughter, James Steinberg.

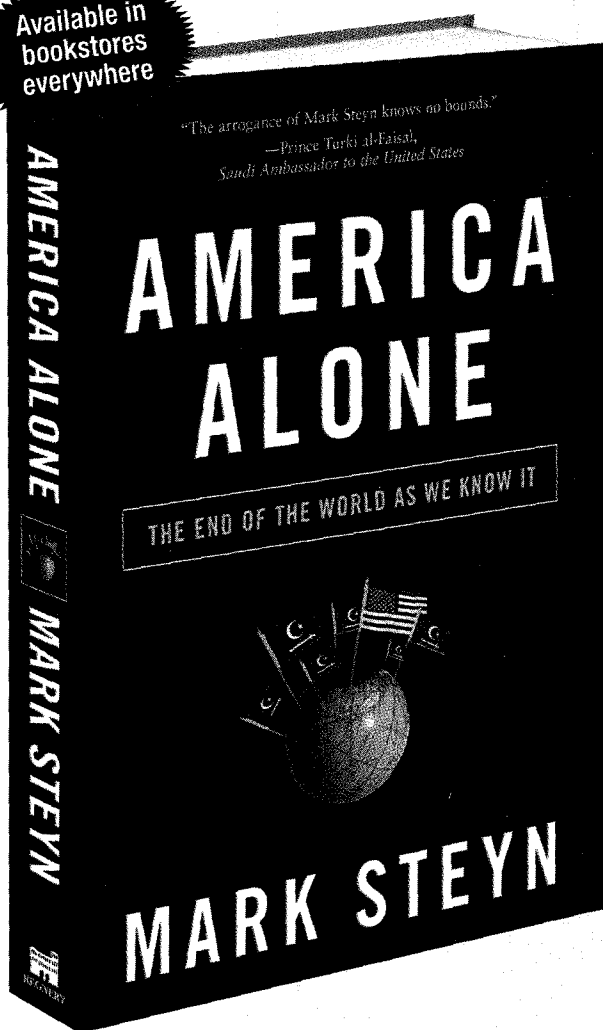
Not all participants answered all questions. Because of rounding, percentages do not always add up to 100.

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THE WORLD IN NUMBERS

Carriers of Conflict

For a preview of future instability and war in the Middle East, watch where Iraqi refugees are going

BY DANIEL L. BYMAN AND KENNETH M. POLLACK

Refugees from Iraq are on the move. More than 1.2 million of them have already fled the country, and recent anecdotal reports—a many-fold increase in the buses traveling daily from Baghdad to Jordan this summer, for example—suggest that the tempo of the exodus is increasing. If the violence in Iraq spreads, the number of Iraqis who flee to neighboring states may well triple. And if the nascent civil war in Iraq unfolds the way

most other recent civil wars have, the refugees will remain outside Iraq for years.

All too often, where large numbers of refugees go, instability and war closely follow—as Middle Eastern history attests. Palestinian refugees, who with their descendants number in the millions, have been a source of regional violence and regime change for decades. They helped provoke the 1956 and 1967 Arab-Israeli wars by conducting cross-border attacks

against Israel and inviting Israeli retaliation against the Arab states that hosted them. Later they turned against their hosts and catalyzed a civil war in Jordan (1970–71) and in Lebanon (1975–90). The “Palestinian question”—and the paltry Arab-state reaction to it—has also contributed to coups by militant Arab nationalists in Egypt, Iraq, and Syria.

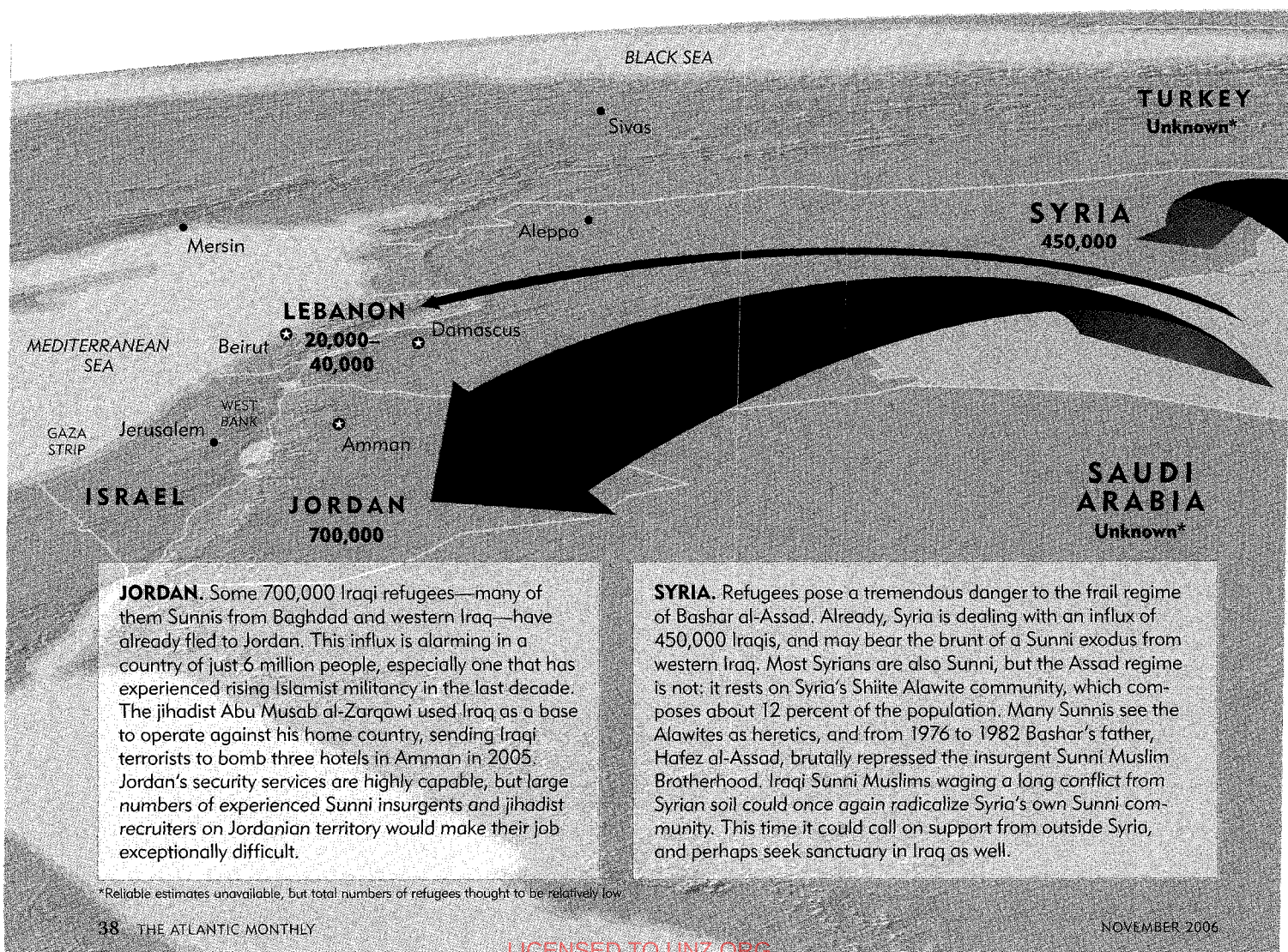
The Palestinian experience in this regard is not unique. The fall of the Zairean ruler Mobutu Sese Seko, for instance, and the subsequent civil war in Zaire, which claimed roughly 4 million lives, can be traced directly to the arrival of Rwandan refugees in 1994. Refugees have a knack for upsetting the status quo.

The iconic image of the refugee is a bedraggled woman clutching her child as she stumbles into a blighted aid camp.

AN IRAQI EXODUS

Estimated number of Iraqi refugees residing in neighboring countries as of September 2006, including some from previous conflicts. Not all refugees live in camps; many are interspersed with local populations.

▲ Refugee Camp with Iraqis



But this picture is incomplete. Refugee camps, which are often under international protection but do not have international policing, can become sanctuaries for militia groups. Host governments often find it hard to stop these militias, even when they want to, either because they lack the military strength to do so or because fighters hide among innocent civilians. In fact, militia leaders sometimes become the leaders of the refugee community, offering protection, imposing their will on any rivals, and recruiting new fighters from among the camp's many traumatized, jobless young men. Tribal elders and other leaders who might oppose violence may find themselves enfeebled by both the trauma of flight and the loss of their traditional basis of power (typically, control of land).

As a result, refugee camps can become deeply radicalized communities, dangerous to their host countries in several ways. The mere presence of militias among the refugees tends to embroil the host country in war by making it a target.

Most Iraqi refugees are not in camps, but dispersed among local populations. But refugees, whether in camps or not, can also corrode state power from the inside, fomenting the radicalization of domestic populations and encouraging rebellion against host governments. The burden of caring for hundreds of thousands of refugees is heavy, straining government administrative capacity and possibly eroding public support for regimes shown to be weak, unresponsive, or callous. And the sudden presence of armed fighters with revolutionary aspirations

can lead disaffected local clans or co-religionists to ally with the refugees against their own government, especially when an influx of one ethnic or religious group upsets a delicate demographic balance, as would likely be the case in some of Iraq's neighbors.

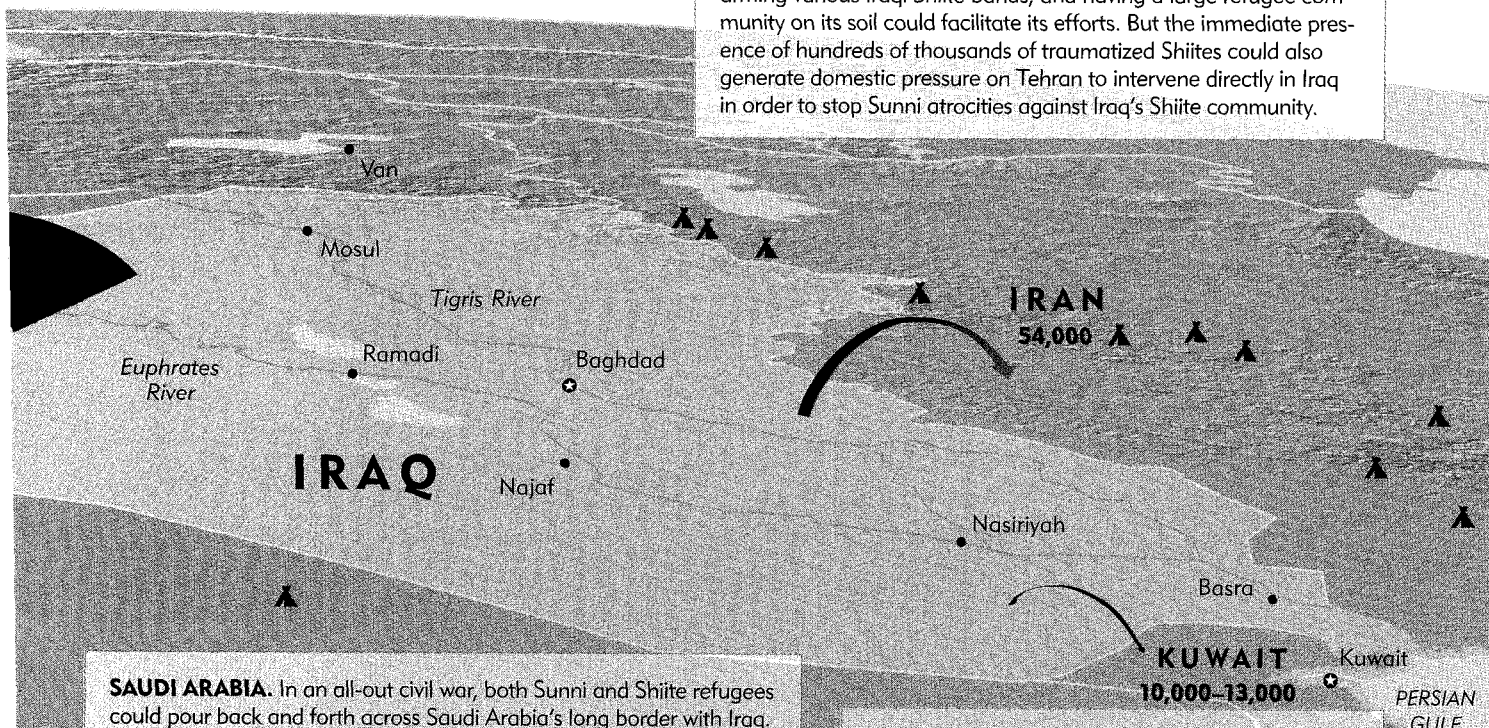
To date, Jordan and Syria have taken in the vast majority of fleeing Iraqis—in large part because those countries have been the most welcoming. But in the worst-case scenario of an all-out civil war, Iraq's other neighbors would not find it easy to resist the influx of refugees. The map below shows some of the places that might be most affected. ▀

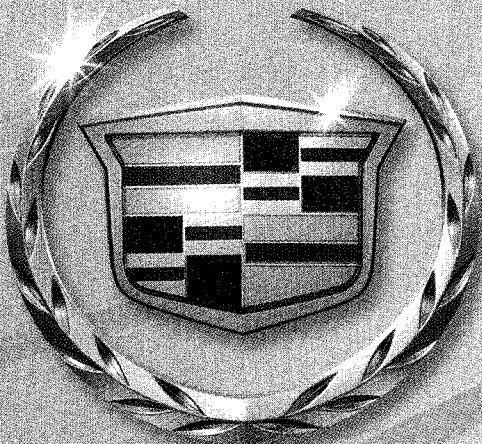
Daniel L. Byman is the director of Georgetown University's Center for Peace and Security Studies. Kenneth M. Pollack is the director of research at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution.

IRAN. Iran might look at the arrival of Shiite refugees as an opportunity to extend its influence in Iraq, by supporting and coopting the militants among them. Tehran is already training, funding, and arming various Iraqi Shiite bands, and having a large refugee community on its soil could facilitate its efforts. But the immediate presence of hundreds of thousands of traumatized Shiites could also generate domestic pressure on Tehran to intervene directly in Iraq in order to stop Sunni atrocities against Iraq's Shiite community.

SAUDI ARABIA. In an all-out civil war, both Sunni and Shiite refugees could pour back and forth across Saudi Arabia's long border with Iraq. In addition to using Saudi Arabia as a safe harbor, militants in both groups would likely become involved in Saudi politics. Armed Iraqi Shiites might support recently restive Saudi Shiites—who are concentrated in the oil-rich Eastern Province—by giving them weapons and an operational haven. Likewise, Iraqi Sunni fighters—many of whom see the Al Saud as bigger devils than even George W. Bush—might join with Saudi terrorists who have been openly fighting the regime since 2003, turning the guerilla methods they've learned against the Saudi government. The Saudi regime is surprisingly resilient. But at the very least, such problems would push oil prices far higher.

KUWAIT. Because it is an easy drive from southern Iraq, many Iraqi Shiites might flee to Kuwait should the violence in Iraq escalate. About one-third of Kuwait's 1 million citizens are Shiite, and the presence of a few hundred thousand Iraqi Shiites would shift Kuwait's political balance. It could stir the country's Shiites to rise up against the ruling Sunnis. The Al Sabah have always managed to weather internal unrest, but the scale of such a problem would be far greater than any they've faced before.





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Primary Sources

The road back from Katrina; Nigeria's restive delta; the long arm of the blue law; tripping your way to sobriety

FOREIGN AFFAIRS More Blood for Oil

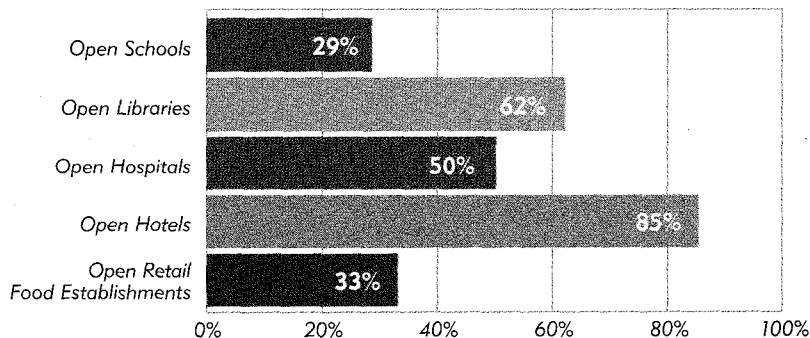
Nigeria is the largest oil producer in Africa, the fifth-largest oil supplier for the United States, and the tenth-largest oil producer in the world—and, like most of the planet's oil-rich nations, it is plagued by mounting violence, a new report from the International Crisis Group warns. Unrest in the country's southern delta region has been growing for a quarter century, stoked by local residents' conflicts with foreign oil companies and Nigeria's famously corrupt central government, and now claims up to a thousand lives a year. According to the Crisis Group report, a "loose network" of local militant groups has formed under the umbrella of the Movement for the

Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), which has succeeded in cutting oil production by 500,000 barrels a day since December 2005. The report praises the Nigerian government and the oil companies for attempting to respond to the violence by promoting development in the region, but notes that these projects are often "hijacked by outsiders and local elites." It isn't enough, the authors warn, to spend generously "when there are unresolved questions about where much of that money goes"—an opinion apparently shared by MEND's spokesman, who recently informed a Crisis Group researcher, via e-mail, that the region is becoming Nigeria's "Vietnam."

—"The Swamps of Insurgency: Nigeria's Delta Unrest," International Crisis Group

AFTER THE STORM

Post-Katrina recovery progress, as of August 2006, compared with pre-storm levels



THE NATION The Year After

In the months since Hurricane Katrina, the Brookings Institution has been tracking reconstruction efforts with a "Katrina Index." The group's recent year-in-review report found some signs of life and hope in metropolitan New Orleans: the housing market seemed to be moving again, with home rehabilitation and demolition proceeding apace and rents on the rise; many hospitals and schools had reopened; tourists were returning. But there was also plenty of bad news. Fewer than half of all bus and streetcar routes were running, a proportion that hadn't budged since January; only a third of the region's restaurants and grocery stores had reopened, as had

fewer than a quarter of child-care centers. Gas and electricity were flowing into 40 percent and 60 percent respectively of the homes and businesses that received those services before the hurricane struck. This mixed picture reflects not just the lack of power in large parts of the city, but also the failure of hundreds of thousands of New Orleanians to return. Six months after the hurricane, the city's labor force had dropped by a third, from 633,759 to 429,469; as of August it stood at just 444,153, and the unemployment rate was rising faster than the growth of the labor force.

—"Special Edition of the Katrina Index: A One-Year Review of Key Indicators of Recovery in Post-Storm New Orleans," Brookings Institution

EDUCATION

A Sport and a Pastime

College athletics may well offer a financial windfall for the Dukes and the USCs. But for most colleges, running a sports program is a money-losing proposition: of the 1,266 colleges and universities that were members of the NCAA in 2001, for instance, only forty-one had athletic departments that turned a profit. Now a new study sets out to determine what schools get for the money they shell out to run athletic programs, by measuring whether student athletes fare better in the workplace than their nonathlete peers. The researchers found that most professions show wage premiums for college athletes: ex-athletes in military, business, and manual-labor jobs outearn their competitors by anywhere from 1.5 percent to 9 percent. However, the wage premium doesn't hold for every line of work: in particular, ex-athletes who go into teaching earn roughly 8 percent less than nonathletes. Regardless, college athletes are actually more likely than nonathletes to teach, with nearly 10 percent of ex-jocks finding their way to the classroom.

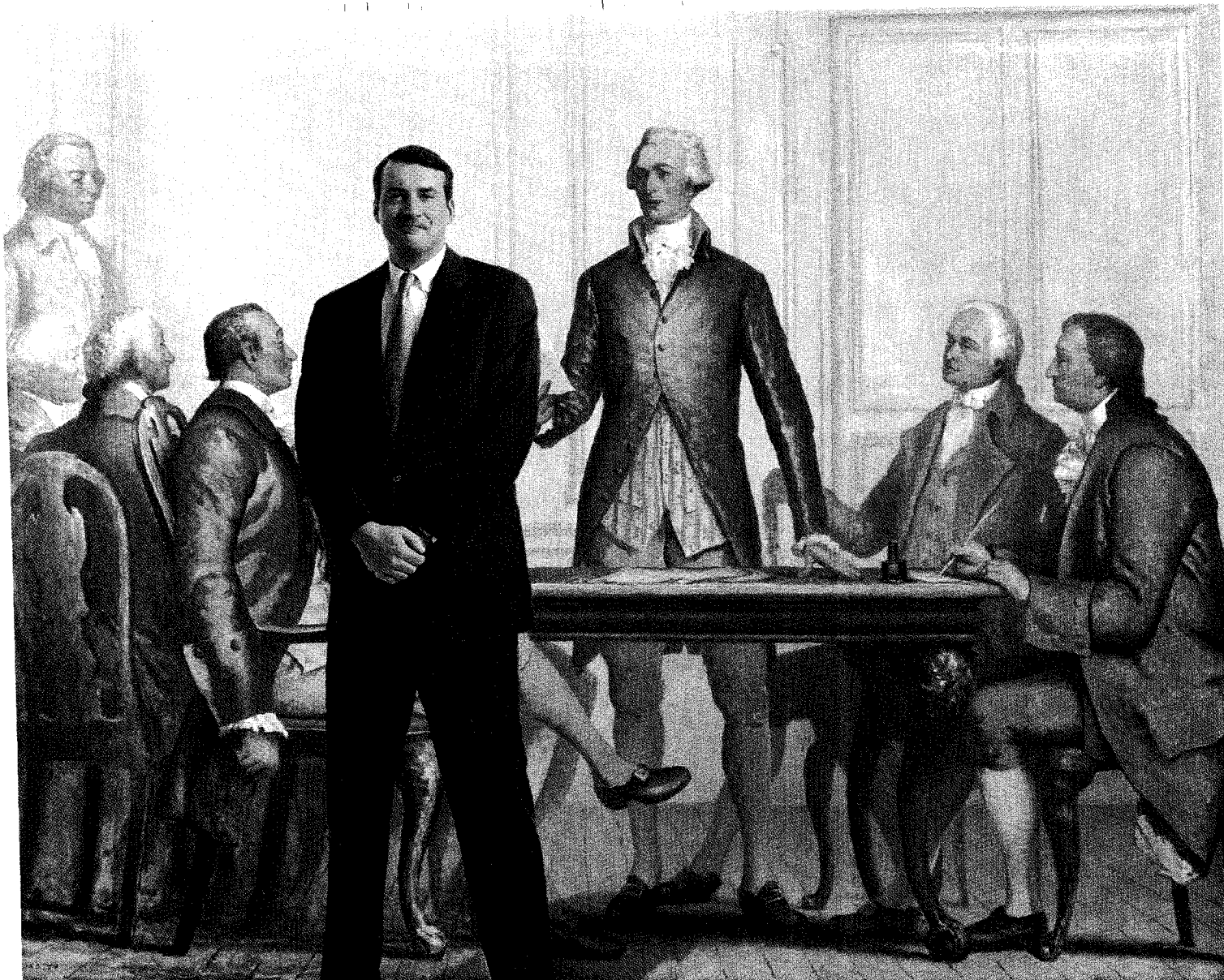
—"Do Former College Athletes Earn More at Work?," D. J. Henderson, A. Olbrecht, and S. W. Polachek, *The Journal of Human Resources*

RELIGION

Sunday Morning Coming Down

Churches may have God on their side, but they can easily lose parishioners to the lure of the shopping mall, the cubicle, or even demon rum, a new study suggests. Two economists examined the effect of repealing "blue laws"—regulations banning certain retail activity on Sundays—on church attendance in the sixteen states that have done away with such laws since 1955, and found that when the laws fall, so too do church attendance and church donations. The drop-off in church attendance was steepest among people who had previously attended weekly, while those who attended more than once a week were unaffected by the laws' repeal. States that repealed their blue laws also saw a noticeable increase in the consumption of alcohol, marijuana, and cocaine, and this spike was concentrated among precisely the people whose churchgoing had dropped off.

—"The Church vs. the Mall: What Happens When Religion Faces Increased Secular Competition?," Jonathan Gruber and Daniel M. Hungerman, National Bureau of Economic Research



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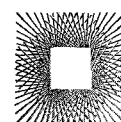
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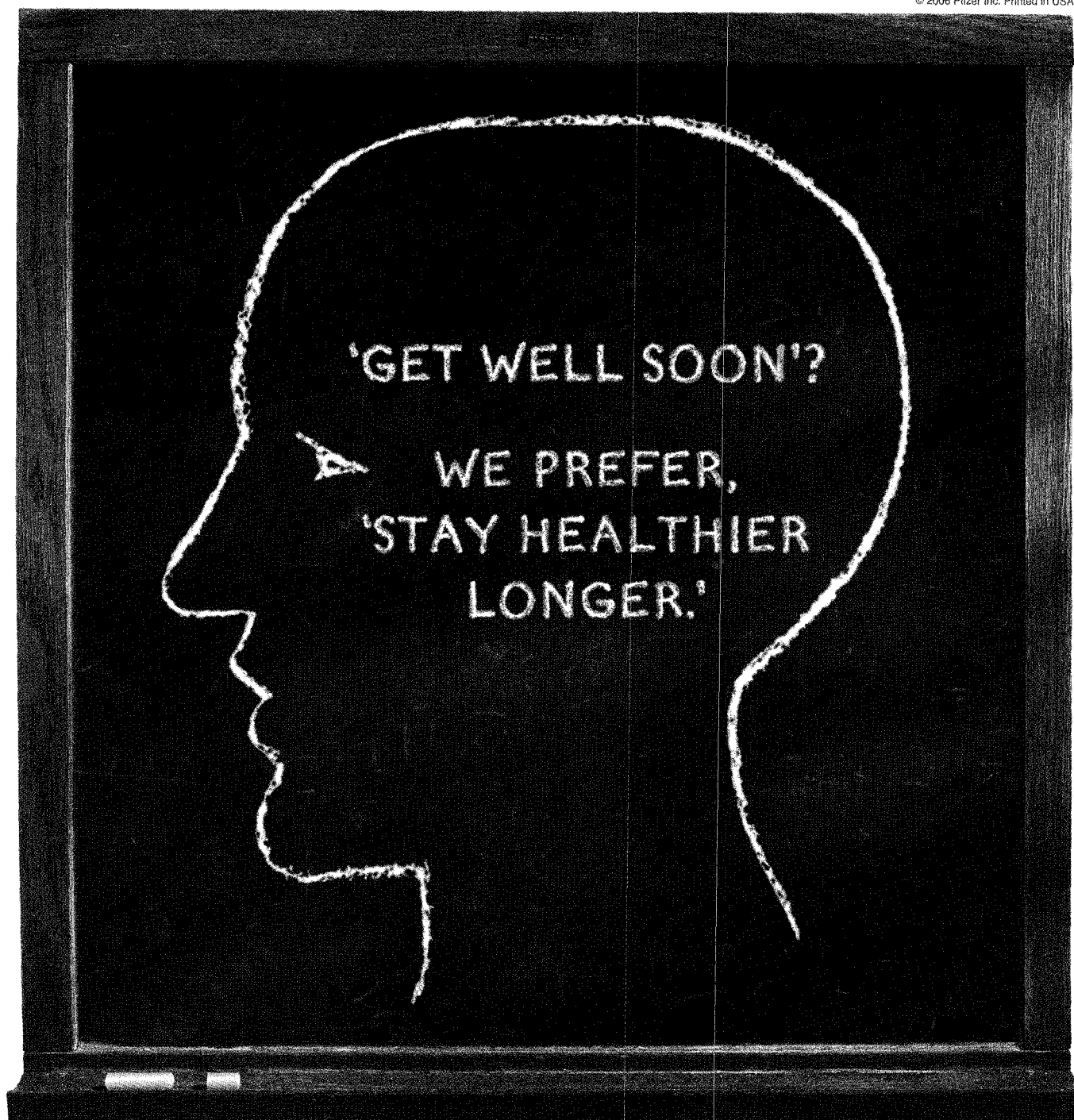
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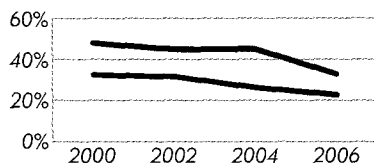
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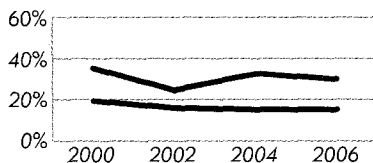
Respondents who believe "all or most" of the news from each outlet

— Republicans
— Democrats

CNN



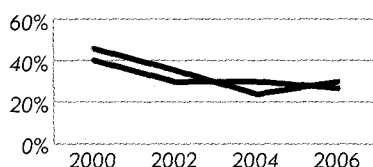
NPR



FOX News



Wall Street Journal



MEDIA

The Culture of Disbelief

The Bush era has changed how Americans relate to the news media, a new report from the Pew Research Center suggests, and these changes break down along partisan lines. During George W. Bush's first term, Republicans became much more likely to distrust reports from mainstream outlets: between 2000 and 2004, for instance, the proportion of GOP voters reporting that they "believe all or most" of the news from CBS News fell from 27 percent to just 15 percent; the percentage who trusted CNN fell from 33 percent to 26 percent; and the percentage who had faith in their local newspaper fell from 21 percent to 16 percent. In the past two years, though, Democrats have come to resemble Republicans in their

unwillingness to believe the news they get from networks and newspapers. (Even supposedly arch-liberal institutions like *The New York Times* and NPR have seen their credibility erode among Democrats since 2004.) Meanwhile, GOP voters seem to be increasingly tuning out the news entirely, at least when it's reporting the latest dire tidings from the Middle East. Since 2004, fewer Americans overall report paying attention to international news (particularly from Iraq), but the drop-off in both categories is sharper among Republicans. In April 2004, 59 percent said they were following Iraq "very closely," but by April 2006, that share had fallen to just 41 percent, compared with 50 percent of Democrats.

—"Online Papers Modestly Boost Newspaper Readership," Pew Research Center for the People and the Press

MEDICINE

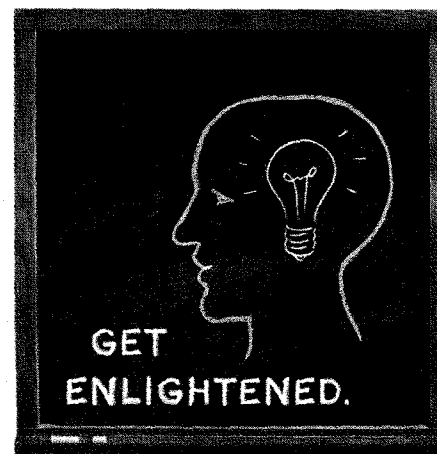
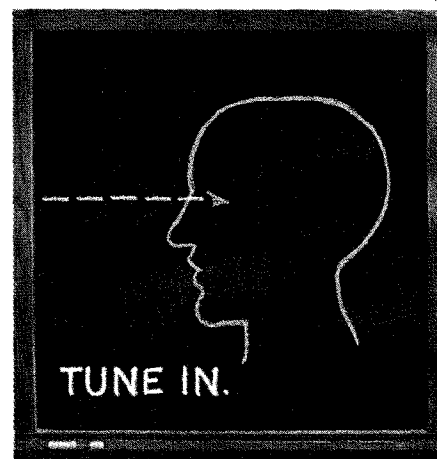
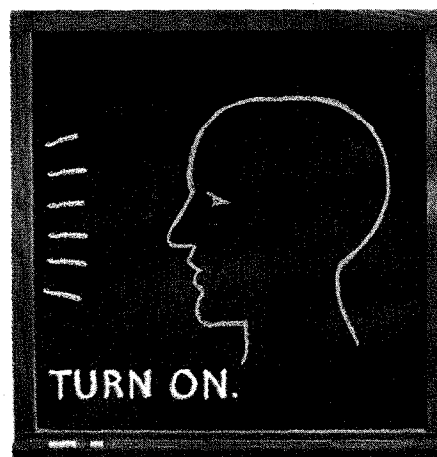
The Electric Cocktail Acid Test

Before there was medicinal marijuana for cancer patients, there was LSD for alcoholics. A new paper in the journal *Social History of Medicine* explores attempts by Canadian researchers, beginning in the 1950s, to wean drinkers off the bottle by giving them acid instead. Having noticed that bad acid trips resembled delirium tremens (the DTs), the sometimes-fatal shakes and nausea that accompany severe alcohol withdrawal, the researchers theorized that LSD could speed recovery by simulating the DTs without killing the patients. Of 700 alcoholics given large hits of acid, about half stayed sober for the next six months. The study won government support and endorsement from Alcoholics Anonymous, but

opponents of the "psychedelic investigators" attacked their methodology and conducted a more controlled experiment, which involved feeding alcoholics LSD, blindfolding them, tying them up, and refusing to speak to them until after they had come down from the high. (These subjects responded less well.) The debate ended, unresolved, in the late 1960s, as the rise of the counterculture brought LSD into medical disrepute, and feeding alcoholics acid to see what happened ceased to be an acceptable research plan.

—Erika Dyck, "'Hitting Highs at Rock Bottom': LSD Treatment for Alcoholism, 1950–1970," *Social History of Medicine*

For links to the documents discussed in these pages, visit www.theatlantic.com/doc/200611/primarysources.



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Education

This is the tenth in a series of archival excerpts in honor of the magazine's 150th anniversary. This installment is introduced by Jonathan Kozol, the National Book Award-winning author of several books on public education.



FOR WELL OVER A century, two seemingly irreconcilable notions of the purposes and character of American public education have warred against each other.

At one extreme has been the concept of the public school as training ground for the future economic roles our students will assume, with sharp distinctions drawn between students whose "innate" abilities presuppose their future economic and professional ascendance and those who require a more practical curriculum to prepare them for the levels of employment thought to be appropriate to their more modest capabilities. Whether for the future surgeon or the future gas-station attendant, schools are to be governed by a highly disciplined agenda. A child's satisfaction in the act of learning is regarded as irrelevant to these objectives, and indeed is sometimes considered a dangerous distraction.

At the opposite extreme is education of a relatively classless nature, in which every child is believed to have unknowable potential and, for this reason, is to be provided, to the

degree this is feasible, with an equally capacious course of study to prepare that child for the fullest possible participation in a democratic social order. Under this conception, schooling should elicit the potential of each child by fostering excitement and authentic pleasure in

the learning process, allowing opportunities for curiosity to thrive, and even permitting episodes of unexpected deviation on the part of students from the preplanned course of study. It is these deviations, according to this way of thinking, that enable teachers to discover areas of hidden motivation in a student, which often represent the "breakthrough moment" for a child who has previously seemed apathetic or resistant.

The *Atlantic* essays assembled here dramatically illustrate the pendulum swings between these two extremes. From Hugo Münsterberg and Richard Herrnstein, on the one hand, to Jacques Barzun, closer to the opposite polarity, we see the range of strongly held beliefs that have resurfaced, in recent years, in the harsh debates about the No Child Left Behind Act, the federal legislation that has given new life to the views that Münsterberg enunciated back in 1909. With parents and teachers torn by these convulsive arguments, the essays below are as relevant today as in the years when they were first published. —JONATHAN KOZOL

For the full text of these articles, visit www.theatlantic.com/ideastour.

THE STANDING OF SCHOLARSHIP IN AMERICA

October 1909

BY HUGO MÜNSTERBERG

....

In a 1909 article that might not seem out of place today, a founding father of applied psychology expressed concern that a trend toward permissiveness in the classroom had gone too far.

There may have been a time ... when education had become ineffective through its formalism and rigidity. The children were forced by severe methods to do work repugnant to them. The prescribed studies of the college boys were dry and tiresome ... A great reaction had to come. School-time was to be made a period of happiness, the child was to learn only what he liked, the college boy was to study only that which seemed interesting ... It was a period in which the children were no longer ordered, but begged

and persuaded ... athletics flourished, and in the school all, with the exception of the teachers, had a good time.

But now in the zigzag movement of educational progress, a new countermovement seems imminent. We have been trying the national experiment long enough to test its results ... The outcome seemed more disappointing than ever. Every one who was not deceived by a showy exterior soon discovered the mental flabbiness and superficiality which resulted from the go-as-you-please methods. We began to feel that those who had never learned to obey never really became their own masters; those who had never trained their attention by forcing their will toward that which is unattractive had to learn by severe disappointments later that a large part of every life's work must be drudgery. The youth left the school with a hundred things in their minds, but without any power of intellectual self-discipline.

Our public life reflects this lack everywhere. The newspapers and magazines, the theatres and the social-reform movements, are more and more made for a public which

looks only to be entertained, and which has lost the power of sustained attention to that which is not attractive in itself ...

If the nation is not to suffer by a cheap complacency, and the triumph of ostentatious mediocrity, the whole educational life must be filled with a new spirit of devotion to serious tasks.

Volume 104, No. 4, pp. 453-460

GOOD-BYE, MR. CHIPS!

April 1934

BY JAMES HILTON

....

James Hilton's novella about an aging schoolmaster at a boarding school first appeared in an evangelical newspaper called the British Weekly in 1933. When a friend of The Atlantic's editor, Ellery Sedgwick, happened to see the piece in galleys at the British Weekly's offices, he liked what he saw and cabled Sedgwick to tell him about it. Sedgwick soon met with the obscure young author and obtained permission to publish the story as the lead feature in the April 1934 Atlantic. It thereupon found widespread popularity, vaulting Hilton to the ranks of best-selling authors, and Mr. Chips to the status of a beloved classic. The actor Robert Donat later earned an Oscar for his portrayal of Mr. Chips in the 1939 film version.

Across the road behind a rampart of ancient elms lay Brookfield, russet under its autumn mantle of creeper. A group of eighteenth-century buildings centred upon a quadrangle, and there were acres of playing fields beyond ... It was the sort of school which, when mentioned, would sometimes make snobbish people confess that they rather thought they had heard of it.

But if it had not been this sort of school it would probably not have taken Chips. For Chips, in any social or academic sense, was just as respectable, but no more brilliant, than Brookfield itself.

It had taken him some time to realize this, at the beginning. Not that he was boastful or conceited, but he had been, in his early twenties, as ambitious as most other young men at such an age. His dream had been to get a headship eventually, or at any rate a senior mastership in a really first-class school; it was only gradually, after repeated trials and failures, that he realized the inadequacy of his qualifications. His degree, for instance, was not particularly good, and his discipline, though good enough and improving, was not absolutely reliable under all conditions. He had no private means and no family connections of any importance. About 1880, after he had been at Brookfield a decade, he began to recognize that the odds were heavily against his being able to better himself by moving elsewhere; but about that time, also, the possibility of staying where he was began to fill a comfortable niche in his mind. At forty, he was rooted, settled, and quite happy. At fifty,

he was the doyen of the staff. At sixty, under a new and youthful Head, he *was* Brookfield—the guest of honor at Old Brookfeldian dinners, the court of appeal in all matters affecting Brookfield history and traditions. And in 1913, when he turned sixty-five, he retired, was presented with a check and a writing desk and a clock, and went across the road to live at Mrs. Wickett's. A decent career, decently closed; three cheers for old Chips, they all shouted, at that uproarious end-of-term dinner.

Three cheers, indeed; but there was more to come, an unguessed epilogue, an encore played to a tragic audience.

Volume 153, No. 4, pp. 385-512

EDUCATION FOR A CLASSLESS SOCIETY

May 1940

BY JAMES BRYANT CONANT

....

In 1940, James Bryant Conant, a research chemist and the president of Harvard University, argued that America's educational system should be reconfigured to foster the success not just of those who excel at book learning, but also of those whose strengths lie elsewhere.

Our secondary-school system is a vast engine which we are only beginning to understand. We are learning only slowly how to operate it for the public good ...

Abilities must be assessed, talents must be developed, ambitions guided. This is the task for our public schools. All the future citizens pass through these institutions. They must be educated as members of a political democracy, but, more important still, they must be equipped to step on to the first rung of whatever ladder of opportunity seems most appropriate. And an appropriate ladder must be found for each one of a diverse group of students. This may seem an overwhelming burden to put upon our educational system. But is it not possible that our public schools, particularly our high schools, can be reconstructed for this specific purpose? ...

Our schools ... must be concerned not only with the able scholar, but with the artist and the craftsman. They must nourish those whose eye or ear or manual dexterity is their greatest asset. They must educate others whose gifts lie in an ability to understand and lead their fellow men. The school curricula must include programs for developing the capacities of many who possess intuitive judgment on practical affairs but have little or no aptitude for learning through the printed page ...

Jefferson in the simpler society of his day naturally thought of only a few avenues of opportunity open through education. Today we must recognize the existence of many and strive for the social equality of all.

Volume 165, No. 5, pp. 593-602

WHAT IS TEACHING?

December 1944

BY JACQUES BARZUN

....

In 1944, Jacques Barzun, a historian, cultural commentator, and professor at Columbia University, shared his thoughts on the dynamics of effective teaching.

Always and everywhere, "He is a schoolteacher" has meant "He is an underpaid pitiable drudge." Even a politician stands higher, because power in the street seems less of a mockery than power in the classroom. But when we speak of Socrates, Jesus, Buddha, and "other great teachers of humanity," the atmosphere somehow changes and the politician's power begins to look shrunken and mean. Supreme examples show that no limit can be set to the power of a teacher ...

The pupil has some curiosity and he wants to know what grownups know. The master has curiosity also, but it is chiefly about the way the pupil's mind—or hand—works. Remembering his own efforts and the pleasure of discovery, the master finds a satisfaction which I have called artistic in seeing how a new human being will meet and make his own some part of our culture—our ways, our thoughts, even our errors and superstitions ...

The pupil feels resentment arising from the fact that the grownup who teaches him appears to know it all. Even under the best conditions of fair play and deliberate spontaneity, the pupil, while needing and wanting knowledge, will hate and resist it. This resistance often makes one feel that the human mind is made of some wonderfully tough rubber, which you can stretch a little by pulling hard, but which snaps back into shape the moment you let go.

The process may be exasperating for the teacher, but consider how the student feels, subjected to daily and hourly stretching. "Here am I," he thinks, "with my brains nicely organized,—with everything, if not in its place, at least where I can find it,—and you come along with a new and strange item that you want to force into my previous arrangement. Naturally I resist. You persist. I begin to dislike you. But at the same time, you show me aspects of this new fact or idea which in spite of myself mesh in with my existing desires. You seem to know the contents of my mind. You show me the proper place for your contribution to my stock of knowledge. Finally, there is brooding over us a vague threat of disgrace for me if I do not accept your offering and keep it and show you that I still have it when you—dreadful thought!—*examine* me!

"So I give in, I shut my eyes and swallow. I write little notes about it to myself, and with luck the burr sticks: I have learned something. Thanks to you? Well, not exactly. Thanks to you and thanks to me. I shall always be grateful for your efforts, but do not expect me to love you, at least not for a

long, long time. When I am fully formed and somewhat battered by the world and yet not too displeased with myself, I shall generously believe that I owe it all to you."

Volume 174, No. 6, pp. 81-87

DEATH AT AN EARLY AGE

September 1967

BY JONATHAN KOZOL

....

Not long after graduating from Harvard, Jonathan Kozol became a fourth-grade teacher in an inner-city Boston public school. In 1967 Kozol described his efforts to make a difference in the lives of children who clearly had been given up on by many others.

Consider what it is like to go into a new classroom and to see before you suddenly, and in a way you cannot avoid recognizing, the dreadful consequences of a year's wastage of so many lives. You walk into a narrow and old wood-smelling classroom and see thirty-five curious, cautious, and untrusting children, aged nine to thirteen, of whom about two thirds are Negro ...

You check around the classroom. Of forty desks five have tops with no hinges. You lift a desktop to fetch a paper, and you find the top has fallen off. There are three windows: one can't be opened. A sign on it written in the messy scribble of some custodial person warns: "Do Not Unlock This Window It Is Broken." The general look of the room is that of a bleak-light photograph of a mental hospital. Above the one poor blackboard, gray rather than really black, and hard to write on, hangs from one tack, lopsided, a motto attributed to Benjamin Franklin: "Well begun is half done." So much within this classroom seems to be a mockery of itself.

Into this grim scenario, drawing on your own pleasures and memories, you do what you can to bring some kind of life. You bring in some cheerful and colorful paintings by Joan Miró and Paul Klee ...

For poetry, instead of the materials recommended by the course of study, you decide to introduce a poem of William Butler Yeats ...

The children are offered something new and lively. They respond to it energetically and their attention doesn't waver. For the first time in a long while, perhaps, there is actually some real excitement and some growing and some thinking going on within that room ...

A ... measure of the impact of these changes came to light when I started testing the class on the intensive work we had been doing in math and English. In less than a month, the math average went up to a median well above grade level. Test score averages over the course of three weeks began at 36, rose to 60, and leveled off at 79.

64



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There was no unusual expertise at work within the classroom. There was, in fact, total professional naiveté as well as considerable technical incompetence. One thing *was* present, however, and this was the personal motivation of the children. It was there, unused and wholly unawakened, but very much in evidence as soon as it was looked for and believed in.

Volume 220, No. 3, pp. 49–55

I.Q.

September 1971

BY RICHARD HERRNSTEIN

....

In 1971 the Harvard psychology professor Richard Herrnstein suggested that, contrary to popular opinion, educational opportunity in a meritocracy would result in more social stratification rather than less. He later went on to coauthor, with Charles Murray, the controversial Bell Curve (1994).

Classlessness is elusive because people vary and because they compete for gain—economic and otherwise. The tendency to respect, honor, remunerate, and perhaps even envy people who succeed is not only ingrained but is itself a source of social pressure to contribute to one's limit ... The premium given to lawyers, doctors, engineers, and business managers is not accidental, for those jobs are left to incompetents at our collective peril. There are simply fewer potentially competent physicians than barbers. The gradient of occupations is, then, a natural measure of value and scarcity. And beneath this gradient is a scale of inborn ability, which is what gives the syllogism its unique potency.

It seems that we are indeed stuck with the conclusion of the syllogism. The data on I.Q. and social-class differences show that we have been living with an inherited stratification of our society for some time. The signs point to more rather than less of it in the future ... The opportunity for social mobility across classes assures the biological distinctiveness of each class, for the unusual offspring—whether more or less able than his (or her) closest relatives—would quickly rise above his family or sink below it, and take his place, both biologically and socially, with his peers.

If this is a fair picture of the future, then we should be preparing ourselves for it instead of railing against its dawning signs. Greater wealth, health, freedom, fairness, and educational opportunity are *not* going to give us the egalitarian society of our philosophical heritage. It will instead give us a society sharply graduated, with ever greater innate separation between the top and the bottom, and ever more uniformity within families as far as inherited abilities are concerned. Naturally, we find this vista appalling, for we have been raised to think of social equality as our goal. The vista reminds us of the world we had hoped to leave behind—aristocracies, privileged classes, unfair advantages

and disadvantages of birth. But it is different, for the privileged classes of the past were probably not much superior biologically to the downtrodden, which is why revolutions had a fair chance of success. By removing arbitrary barriers between classes, society has encouraged the creation of biological barriers. When people can freely take their natural level in society, the upper classes will, virtually by definition, have greater capacity than the lower.

Volume 228, No. 3, pp. 43–64

ILLIBERAL EDUCATION

March 1991

BY DINESH D'SOUZA

....

In 1991, as the term political correctness was working its way into the national vocabulary, the rising conservative star Dinesh D'Souza criticized what he saw as a new spirit of intolerance on American college campuses.

Each fall some 13 million students, 2.5 million of them members of minority groups, enroll in American colleges ... At the university they hope to shape themselves as whole human beings, both intellectually and morally. Brimming with idealism, they wish to prepare themselves for full and independent lives in the workplace, at home, and as citizens of a democratic society. In short, what they seek is a liberal education.

By the time these students graduate, many colleges and universities will not have met their need for all-round development. Instead, by precept and example, they will have taught them that all rules are unjust and all preferences are principled; that justice is simply the will of the stronger party; that standards and values are arbitrary, and the ideal of the educated person is largely a figment of bourgeois white male ideology; that individual rights are a red flag signaling social privilege, and should be subordinated to the claims of group interest; that all knowledge can be reduced to politics and should be pursued not for its own sake but for the political end of power; that convenient myths and well-intentioned lies can substitute for truth; that double standards are acceptable as long as they are enforced to the benefit of minority victims; that disputes are best settled not by rational and civil debate but by accusation, intimidation, and official prosecution; that the university stands for nothing in particular and has no claim to be exempt from outside pressures; and that a multiracial society cannot be based on fair rules that apply to every person but must rather be held together with a forced rationing of power among separatist racial groups. In short, instead of liberal education, what many American students are getting is its diametrical opposite: an education in closed-mindedness and intolerance—which is to say, illiberal education.

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THE Atlantic IDEAS



September 16

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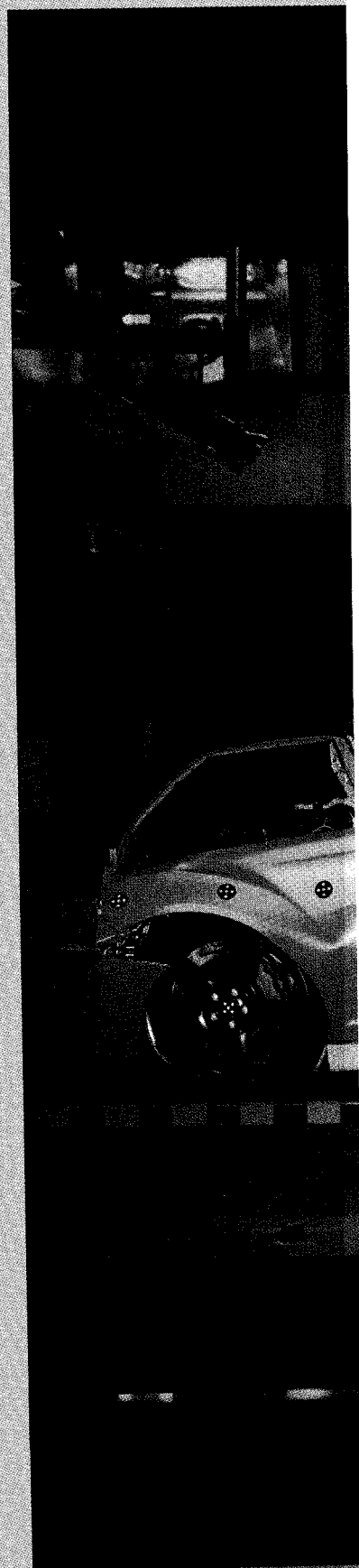
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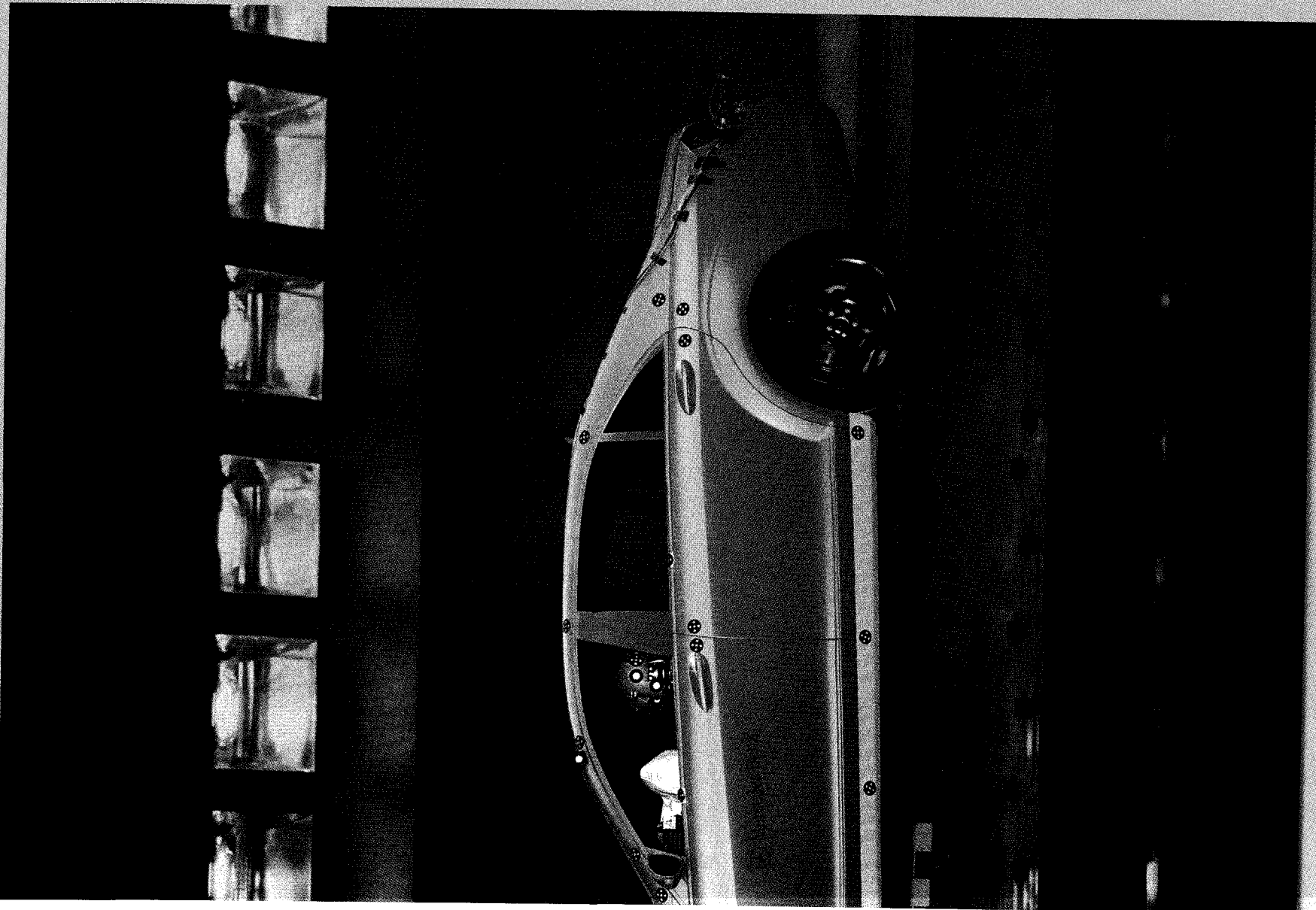


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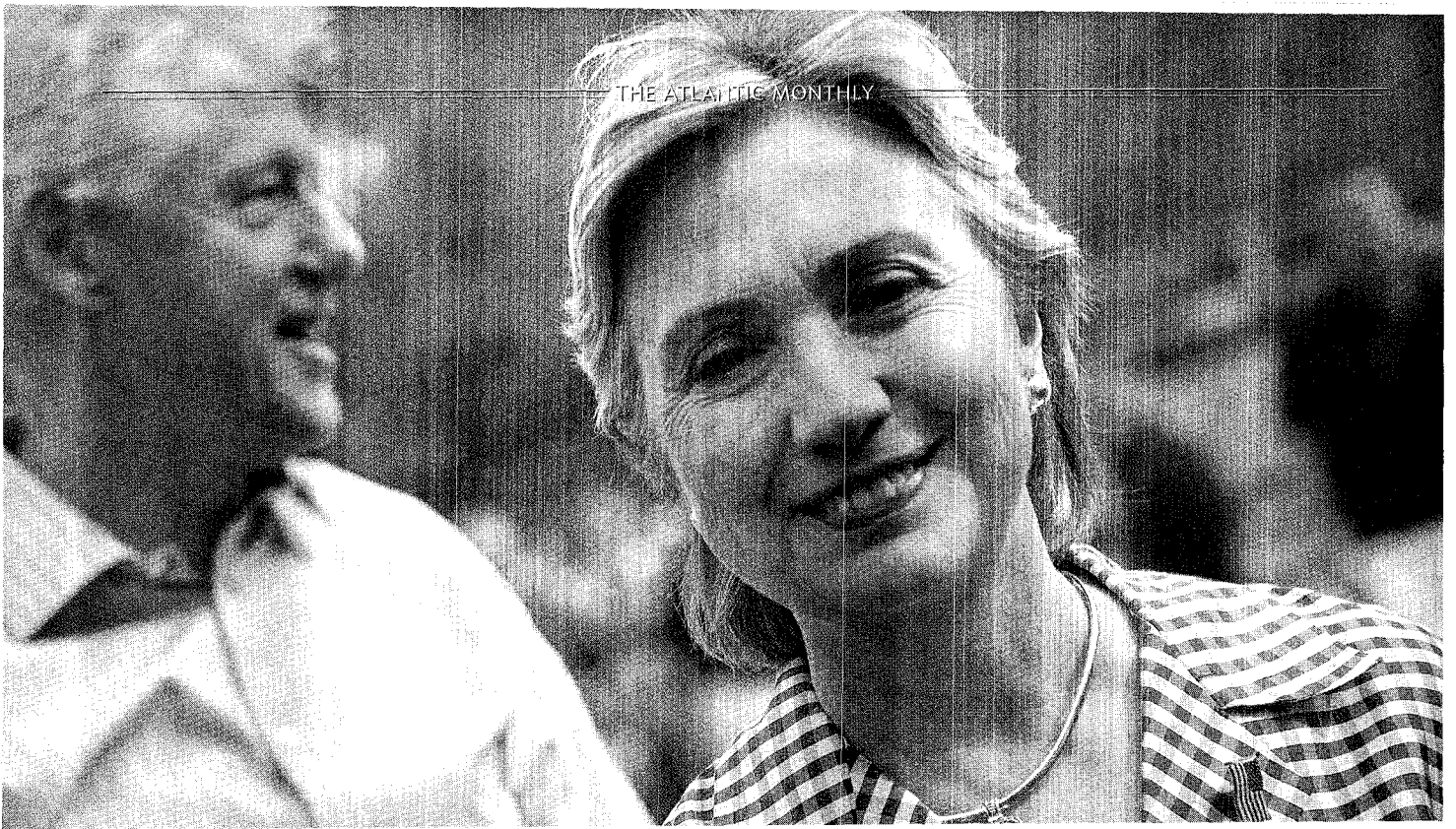
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*How Hillary Clinton turned herself
into the consummate Washington player*

Take Two

BY JOSHUA GREEN

Photographs by Jez Coulson

Of the many realms of power on Capitol Hill, the least understood may be the lawmakers' prayer group. The tradition of private worship in small, informal gatherings is one that stretches back for generations, as does a genuine tendency within them to transcend partisanship, though as with so much that is religiously oriented in Washington, the chief adherents are the more conservative Republicans.

Most of the prayer groups are informally affiliated with a secretive Christian organization called the Fellowship, established in the 1930s by a Methodist evangelist named Abraham Vereide, whose great hope was to preach the word of Jesus to political and business leaders throughout the world. Vereide believed that the best way to change the powerful was through discreet personal ministry, and over his lifetime he succeeded to a remarkable degree. The first Senate prayer group met over breakfast in 1943; a decade later one of its members, Senator Frank Carlson, persuaded Dwight Eisenhower to host a Presidential Prayer Breakfast, which has become a tradition.

*Joshua Green is a senior
editor of The Atlantic.*

Though it still sponsors what is now called the National Prayer Breakfast, the Fellowship scrupulously avoids publicity, as Vereide insisted it must. "If you want to help people, Jesus said, you don't do your alms in public," Douglas Coe, the group's leader since the late 1960s, said in a rare interview several years ago.

Today, on Capitol Hill, as the old avenues of bipartisanship have gradually been blocked off by hardening ideology, the prayer groups have become cherished sanctuaries for their members—providing respite, however brief, from the cacophony of political Washington. Speaking about a group is strongly discouraged, and what transpires at meetings is strictly off the record. As a result, the groups provide an intimate setting in which members can share their faith without fear of being judged. "Once you take off the cloak of politics and look into a person's soul, you find that you can establish a relationship that is enduring and deep and doesn't let politics get in the way," one longtime participant explained to me. "If you're going to be consistent with the teachings of Jesus, it's about forgiveness, reconciliation, and

peace.” Many who come, he said, are surprised to wind up forming close friendships with colleagues who in any other setting would be considered political enemies.

You’re not supposed to think about lofty spiritual affairs in terms so temporal as their political importance. But among the prayer groups, one holds special status: a tight-knit gathering of about a dozen senators which still meets every Wednesday morning for prayer and discussion, led by Douglas Coe himself. Each week, someone starts the meeting by giving personal testimony, secure in the support of the audience. Once, Senator Dan Coats stood before the group and sang “Jesus Loves Me, This I Know.”

The roster of regular participants has included such notable conservative names as Brownback, Santorum, Nickles, Enzi, and Inhofe. Then, in 2001, just after the new class of senators was sworn in, another name was added to the list: Hillary Rodham Clinton.

One spring Wednesday, a few months into the term, Senator Sam Brownback’s turn came to lead the group, and he rose intending to talk about a recent cancer scare. But as he stood before his colleagues Brownback spotted Clinton, and was overcome with the impulse to change the subject of his testimony. “I came here today prepared to share about this

conservatives. “You’re not talking about some tree-hugging, Jesus-is-my-Buddha sort of stuff,” says David Kuo, a former Bush official in the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, who worked with Clinton to promote joint legislation and who, like Brownback, has apologized to her for past misdeeds. “These are powerful evangelicals she’s meeting with.” Like many conservatives, they are caught between warring dictates of their faith: the religious one, which requires them to embrace a fellow Christian, and the political one, more powerful in some, which causes them to instinctively distrust the motives of a Clinton. Everyone in Washington experiences their dilemma at one time or another—the lack of an Archimedean point from which to judge Hillary Clinton.

A full term in the Senate has not made the task any easier. In her Senate race six years ago Clinton seemed headed for an epic showdown with Rudolph Giuliani that she appeared likely to lose. History wrote a different ending. Clinton will cruise to reelection this month without serious challenge. After she was elected, Trent Lott, the Republican leader at the time, voiced a widespread sentiment—held by more than just Republicans—when he mused, not unhelpfully, that lightning might strike her before she arrived. Yet by this past spring, when Lott and Clinton introduced legislation

“Everything I do carries political risk because nobody gets the scrutiny that I get,” Hillary Clinton told me, finally.

It’s not like I have any margin for error whatsoever. I don’t. Everybody else does, and I don’t. And that’s fine.

That’s just who I am, and that’s what I live with.”

experience in my life that has caused great suffering, the result of which has deepened my faith,” Brownback said, according to someone who watched the scene unfold. “But I’m overcome now with only one thought.” He confessed to having hated Clinton and having said derogatory things about her. Through God, he now recognized his sin. Then he turned to her and asked, “Mrs. Clinton, will you forgive me?” Clinton replied that she would, and that she appreciated the apology.

“It was an extraordinary moment,” the member told me.

This repentance fostered an unlikely relationship that has yielded political bounty. Clinton and Brownback went on to cosponsor one measure protecting refugees fleeing sexual abuse, and another to study the effects on children of violent video games and television shows. “That morning helped make our working relationship,” Brownback told me recently. “It brought me close to someone I did not ever imagine I would become close to.” Since then, Clinton has teamed up on legislation with many members of the prayer group.

Hillary Clinton’s proficiency in this innermost sanctum has unnerved some of the capital’s most exalted religious

to remove FEMA from the Department of Homeland Security, forty-nine Republicans shared the designation of having cooperated with her, including many who once numbered among her fiercest critics.

There is also the question of her public dexterity. The one major initiative she led in her husband’s administration, a broad reform of the health-care system, was a calamitous failure, and led to the Republican takeover of Congress in 1994. But Clinton has adapted surprisingly well to the byways of the Senate, becoming what few could have foreseen: a wily manipulator of the Senate’s outsize egos, and a master of cloakroom politics. This has come at the cost of some of her most deeply held values. However flawed Clinton’s health-care plan was in execution, it was undergirded by an element of sincere idealism that is all but absent from her Senate record. Clinton has chosen systematic caution as the path to power.

But few in the Senate today would deny that, whatever her motives, Clinton is diligent about her work there, and successful in ways that have moderated her image. Her deft

touch with conservative colleagues has thus far neutralized the Republican National Committee's strategy of getting people to put her in the same mental category as bumbling liberals like Nancy Pelosi and Howard Dean. She's no easy target. Her partnerships were deemed so successful in moderating her image that Karl Rove, according to a source close to him, sent word last year to halt Republican cooperation with her—an edict that has been ignored. As the atmosphere in Washington has deteriorated, Clinton has emerged within the Senate as the unlikeliest of figures: she, not George W. Bush, has turned out to be a uniter, not a divider.

What she might do next vexes many in the Democratic Party. As Hillary Clinton has worked to establish her place in the Senate, she has also been central in the effort to build up a new party infrastructure. Democrats now seem poised for a comeback—perhaps as soon as this month's elections. But many worry that Clinton will soon go further and decide to seek the presidency. Should she win the nomination but lose the election, they believe, the party could suffer incalculable damage.

Over the last six months, Clinton has given a series of important policy speeches designed to fortify her national

The only thing that makes Clinton different is her Secret Service detail, and even that is practically invisible. In most everyday settings, her life today barely resembles the circus of her last campaign. The last six years have featured her near-constant presence in every corner of the state, quieting the cries of “carpetbagger” and making her a familiar enough presence in the city that her celebrity now seems manageable. She was greeted with polite smiles and nods of recognition, a token of this hard-won standing.

Clinton's formative experience on the national stage was her leadership of the failed health-care effort, which was to have been the centerpiece of her husband's first presidential term. A lot of what makes her success as a senator so interesting is how it contrasts with her performance during that initiative's epic collapse. Many of her friends and colleagues believe the episode devastated Clinton personally, and I hoped to get a sense of how the loss might have changed her perspective. I had come to think of it as the Rosebud event through which her subsequent career could best be understood.

Clinton did not agree. “I didn't take it personally,” she said with emphasis. That didn't quite ring true. How could she not have? “I was disappointed for the country. I thought

Her partnerships were deemed so successful in moderating her image that Karl Rove, according to one source close to him, sent word last year to halt Republican cooperation with her—an edict that has been ignored.

profile. Most people, including her closest advisers, believe this to be the groundwork for a presidential bid. Clinton has become a vocal critic of the president and, gingerly, of the war she voted to support—even as that vote has begun to eclipse everything else she has done.

The story of Clinton's Senate career mirrors that of her political life generally: a pattern of ambition, failure, study, and advancement. It provides a showcase for her very considerable skills. But it also points up her core liabilities as she prepares to move from the New York stage and back to the national one. Maybe one way to frame the question is this: Can a woman who has made herself small enough for the Senate be big enough for the country?

In August, I met Hillary Clinton in a New York City hotel for the first of several wide-ranging conversations about her political career. Our initial talk straddled a meeting she had scheduled with the Israeli foreign minister, Tzipi Livni. I arrived early and happened to catch Livni's entrance. A half-dozen Israeli agents, looking all business, leaped out of their vehicles and swept into the lobby. “Please step back,” one of them “asked” as he approached me, and then moved to impede my view as Livni was hustled into an elevator.

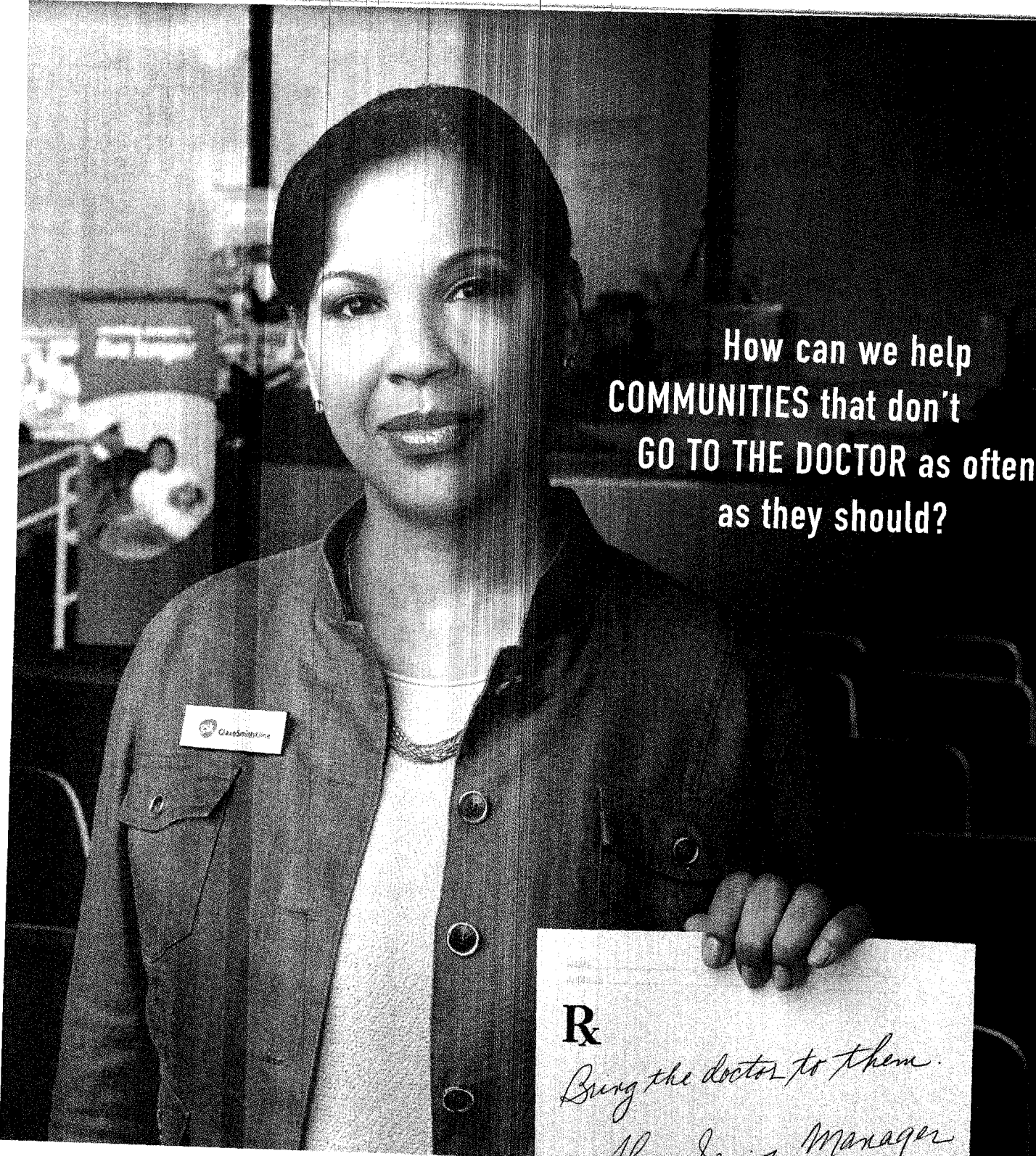
When Clinton arrived, a few minutes later, she barely caused a stir. Like any other senator, she is attended to by a press aide and a “body person,” cell phone to ear and BlackBerry to hand, who sees to her limitless horizon of engagements.

It was really unfortunate that, once again, the powers of the status quo and special interests and political partisanship had carried the day, so just like Truman and Johnson and Nixon and Carter we were not going to be able to save money and improve quality, and cover everybody. I thought that was really unfortunate. But I did not take that personally.”

Clinton was dressed in a loosely woven tan pantsuit highlighted with subtle gold jewelry, her blond hair swept back stylishly. The hairstyle, as she has recently taken to pointing out at public appearances, is one she's managed to stick with for several years—a line good for a laugh each time, alluding as it does to her famously changing styles during her husband's presidency, which were an easy metaphor for her inability to find a comfortable role in his administration. When she delivers the line, one also senses her wish that the metaphor ran the other way, to a clear index that she has now found her footing.

For the first few years of her Senate term, Clinton took pains to downplay her national status. Today, she is everywhere, intent on being recognized as a political figure who has come into her own. The new persona, like the hairstyle, is carefully arranged to impress. She leaves nothing to chance. Just arranging an interview requires the Zen patience and preternatural psychological abilities of a hostage negotiator.

As we talked—about September 11, the war in Iraq, her time in the Senate, and (briefly, abortively) her husband—she showed little trace of the coldness that has long been ascribed



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to her. Instead, first establishing a rapport and then working the jury like the first-class lawyer she is, Clinton laid out the case for how the world should see her: as a steady, strong leader committed to standing up to George W. Bush and working both sides of the aisle to “get things done” for the people of New York. It’s a presentation that rejects any hint of weakness or culpability, and not even the memories of the health-care debacle can tarnish it. “At the time we went forward,” she says now, “the Democratic leadership told us how they wanted us to do it. It turned out they were wrong.”

Clinton wants to be seen—but get too close and you’ll find the view impeded. Something politely tells you, “Please step back.”

But the past remains a powerful presence. A moment later, the new Hillary was briefly possessed by the old one. It turned out that the public rebuke over health care had not remotely been forgotten: “The fact that I was *doing* it was such a shock to the Washington system. I don’t think I ever recovered from that. That was the real challenge: ‘He put his *wife* in charge!’ ... I think it was very convenient to hang this all on the first lady.”

Thirteen years later, most other people find it hard to recall the trauma of that period. Veterans of Bill Clinton’s White House often speak of themselves as having been a “modernizing force” in the Democratic Party, one that swept out the old interest-group-driven factions that had long held sway. Their guiding idea was that a more pragmatic, results-oriented approach to governing held greater promise for achieving traditional liberal goals. This was coupled with a self-confidence that was at a peak in the heady days after the 1993 inauguration. The Clintons saw themselves as reformers empowered to abolish the old ways of Washington. Bill Clinton’s decision to make Hillary the head of the task force that would write the health-care bill set off grumbling in some quarters of the administration from the outset. She had never been elected to office or served in a formal policy position in government. But as first lady of Arkansas she had led a successful commission on education reform, the centerpiece of her husband’s second term. No one doubted that she would get a prominent role; rather, the president’s political advisers worried that she would get *too* prominent a role, and the public would grow to resent its unelected “copresident.”

As a discrete but important issue, health care seemed to finesse this problem. It also became the main element in Hillary Clinton’s effort to recast the role of first lady into something far more substantial than what had been bequeathed to her—something more along the lines of a senior White House adviser. What made this seem plausible, even wise, was her formidable record quite apart from her service as the first lady of Arkansas. Clinton had cochaired the Children’s Defense Fund and earned a national reputation as a pioneering theorist on children’s law. Also active in women’s issues, she had compiled three editions of the *Handbook on Legal Rights for Arkansas Women*, and was the first woman partner at the state’s most prestigious law firm. Twice in the five years before her husband became president, *The National Law Journal*

named her to its list of America’s most powerful lawyers. She was blue-chip talent through and through.

She didn’t shy from the job. Clinton assumed a high public profile, declaring that health-care reform would be “the Social Security Act of this generation and the defining legislation for generations to come.” She approached her assignment much as she had the earlier one in Arkansas—like a good lawyer—this time bearing down and learning the mind-numbing intricacies of the health-care system.

Clinton shines in precisely the sort of situation where she is called upon to master a distinct body of knowledge. “Both Clintons are intensely smart, but they have different ways of approaching issues,” says John Podesta, the White House chief of staff in Bill Clinton’s second term and now an adviser to Hillary Clinton. “I’d describe him as a horizontal thinker, whose broad-ranging mind is always connecting one thing to another. She tends to drill down deep into a single subject. One feels, at some level with her, more tightness, discipline, and focus.” These skills she eagerly applied to the problem of health-care policy.

Clinton acquired an early patron in Senator Jay Rockefeller, the West Virginia Democrat whose career was then at its apex. Rockefeller was viewed as presidential material, but had opted to pass on the 1992 election. Health care was his major interest. The agony of watching his mother’s lengthy battle with Alzheimer’s had made him a crusader for universal health insurance, and in the years before Bill Clinton was elected he had organized labor and health interests toward that goal.

After a series of dazzling performances testifying about health care on the Hill, Clinton quieted many of her critics. Friends describe this period as her happiest in the administration. “When I think of Hillary I have one enduring image,” says Maggie Williams, her close friend and former chief of staff. “It’s of her after a day of events and meetings in an elevator, her arms bursting with books and papers and briefings, all about health care, on her way to the residence. She looked extraordinarily happy.”

It’s hard to imagine today, but press coverage at the time generally took the view that Hillary, not Bill, was the more dynamic and impressive Clinton. Her congressional testimony made her the administration’s first star.

National health care was a dream that had eluded U.S. presidents since Franklin Delano Roosevelt tried to include it in his plan for Social Security. Special interests always beat it back. Roosevelt had to drop the medical benefit from the legislation when doctors protested the idea of government intrusion. Pharmaceutical and insurance companies helped kill subsequent attempts. Only Lyndon Johnson’s landslide victory, in 1964, created the fleeting conditions that allowed Medicare and Medicaid to pass.

Mindful of this history, the Clintons thought they could prevail by rigidly shielding the process from the established interests—excluding even key Cabinet members. When presidents want a bill, they typically assign it to the relevant Cabinet member or put forward a set of principles and let allies in Congress write the legislation. Both strategies offer

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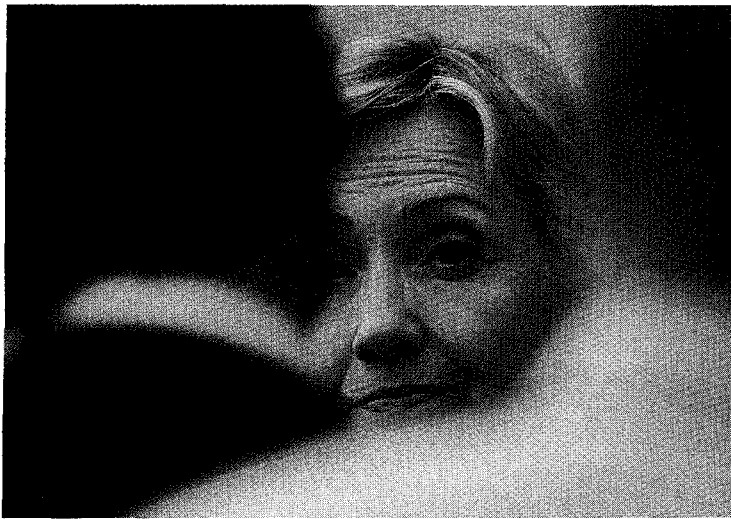
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the advantage of warding off potential political problems and building a base of support: everyone gets an early sense of the important details and a chance to speak up.

But that includes those interests likely to oppose the legislation, who may seek to influence its outcome. Assessing the historical record of how major reform had been stymied in the past, Bill Clinton doubted that even his own Cabinet could fend off such pressure. And so the president and his counselors devised an end run around Washington's normal way of doing business. They chose their good friend Ira Magaziner, a business consultant without Washington ties, to manage the task force with Hillary. The Clintons and Magaziner shared a certain hubris, as well as an often articulated disdain for (in what was then the president's favored phrase of opprobrium) "the traditional Washington views" on health care.



So the Clinton White House made the audacious decision to write the whole thing itself, in a task force shrouded in secrecy, consciously shutting out Congress and the health-care community. They would simply outsmart the Washington establishment.

The task force quickly metastasized into a herd of more than 600, whose inescapably slow pace, along with continual interference from other administration priorities, kept pushing back the timeline for a bill. Eventually, as the months went on, members of Congress introduced competing plans. Some of these, notably that of Representative Jim Cooper, a Democrat from Tennessee, enjoyed broad bipartisan support. Bob Woodward's book *The Agenda*, which details this period in the White House, notes "an increasing self-righteousness in Hillary" as frustration led to "a new, deeply anti-Washington flavor in her tone." In his memoir, *All Too Human*, George Stephanopoulos describes her as "inflexible." When "Hillarycare" finally arrived, in late October, the draft was a monstrous 1,342 pages long (Cooper's was about 300). Hillary's original star turn was all but forgotten.

The Clintons considered several legislative options before settling on a clever, but risky, strategy that seemed by then to be their best hope of getting a bill through Congress. An anonymous administration official quoted in a *Time* column

had earlier belittled the petulant chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, Daniel Patrick Moynihan ("We'll roll right over him if we have to"), who should have played a critical role. The decision was made to try to attach health care instead to the annual budget reconciliation bill. Theoretically, this offered a number of advantages. The reconciliation bill is the single most important piece of legislation Congress passes each year, because it locks in the spending and legislative changes in the budget—it simply must pass, or the government shuts down. As such, it is accorded special procedural shortcuts: it requires only a simple majority vote in both chambers of Congress, and, tantalizing from the administration's standpoint, Senate rules permit just twenty hours of debate, so the bill can't be filibustered. (Ronald Reagan used the reconciliation bill of 1981 to drastically shift spending from domestic programs to defense.)

What this strategy didn't account for was the considerable ego of Senator Robert C. Byrd, the West Virginia Democrat who was then chairman of the Appropriations Committee, through which the reconciliation bill would pass. Byrd worships the Senate the way some cultures worship their ancestors, believing that the Founders' ideas live on in its arcane rules and procedures. He has a flair for windy oratory—nothing clears the Senate floor like his annual perorations celebrating Mother's Day or the first day of spring. The author of a four-volume history of the Senate, he holds strong views about what should, and should not, be permitted. And he has the means to impose them on others.

Byrd felt the Clinton strategy violated the spirit of the budget reconciliation bill by trying to attach something to it that had nothing to do with the budget. In the mid-1980s he had established the "Byrd rule," which forbade just this sort of tampering with the bill. Health care "was a big piece of legislation, it was important—it ought to have been debated," he told me recently. "I certainly was abhorrent of the idea of ramming this piece of legislation through by that mechanism." A succession of eminences led by Jay Rockefeller pleaded with him to relent. The president called him. Byrd wouldn't budge. The elaborate plan to circumvent the establishment collapsed under the stern gaze of its senior member. "I was the bear trap," Byrd told me, with a twinkle of defiant pride.

It is now widely accepted that the legislative strategy for health care was fatally flawed. Clinton's White House never really understood the Senate. (Of the Clintons' inner circle, Stephanopoulos, Leon Panetta, and Howard Paster all came from the House, and Al Gore had always been an outsider in the Senate.) Hillary Clinton is neither entirely wrong, nor especially charitable, to blame others for the bill's demise. In her 2003 memoir, *Living History*, she singles out another House veteran, Majority Leader Richard Cephart. But many administration officials had harbored serious misgivings from the outset, and many more grew to share them as the year went by. In *All Too Human*, Stephanopoulos charges that "her position stifled healthy skepticism about our strategy," causing "quiet resentment." By autumn President Clinton himself seems to have sensed the premonitory signs of failure, and maneuvered to cut a face-saving deal.

The best option now lay with Representative Jim Cooper, who, after first offering his own bill to the Clintons and being rebuffed, had introduced it in early October, stopping short of the universal coverage Clinton insisted upon but featuring many of the managed-care ideas she later came to embrace. That summer, a longtime friend of the Clintons named Thomas Schneider mentioned to them that Cooper had been a law-school classmate and remained a close friend. Schneider offered to broker a meeting.

One Saturday in late September, Schneider, Cooper, and Bill Clinton set out for an early-morning round of golf at the Army-Navy Club. Discussion soon turned to health care. Ever the deal maker, Clinton started probing Cooper for the possibility of a compromise. "Clinton was an artist at negotiation," says one member of the group. "There was a lot of common ground there, and he had a good sense of the public mood about health care."

It started to drizzle, so Clinton invited the group back to the White House, where the talk continued into the afternoon over beers. Cooper canceled a trip to Tennessee and kept listening. By the time he left that evening, says the source, "it was very close to a handshake." Clinton's parting words were, "Look, I think we can make this work. But Hillary's leading this, and you'll need to have a meeting with her." Cooper agreed.

But when he met with the first lady shortly thereafter, it was as if the golf outing had been just a dream. "She was looking for Jim to surrender 100 percent," says one source with knowledge of the meeting. "It was brutal," Cooper told me. Things collapsed quickly, and no deal was struck. Hillary Clinton's major initiative died ignominiously many months later, without even coming to a vote.

A close friend of the Clintons offers this diagnosis: "She was focusing on the *delivery* of health care. She was utterly and totally tone-deaf to the politics."

When she feels that she is being led in a direction she doesn't want to go, Clinton retreats to a space of her own choosing. In our interview she insisted that, even in 1994, she viewed health care as merely a political defeat—a tough day at the office. When I asked how she handled the disappointment of the experience, she said brightly: "It wasn't more than a week after we lost that Senator Kennedy and I were talking at the White House and he said, 'We can't let this die,' and I said, 'You're darned right, we've got to keep going.' [And he replied,] 'Well, let's do children!'"

But with someone so professionally accomplished and publicly ambitious, it's hard to believe such a loss could have been anything less than a terrible blow. In *Living History*, Clinton supports this view by describing how Maggie Williams, attuned to her despair, arranged for a meeting of the close-knit group of staffers and friends who refer to themselves collectively as "Hillaryland." "I had been able to conceal my distress and discouragement from everyone on my staff except Maggie," Clinton writes. "Now it all came out. Fighting back tears, my voice cracking, I poured out apologies. I was sorry if I had let everyone down and contributed to our losses. It wouldn't happen again." She also reveals that

she considered withdrawing from political and policy work entirely, for fear of hindering her husband's presidency.

At some point during the second term, however, Clinton decided to retrench and return once more to the political arena—only this time with an eye toward learning the system from within. It could not have been lost on her that while she had excelled in the hearing room, she had failed entirely to understand the cloakroom. It is often said of Clinton, as it is of so many of the city's hyper-driven achievers, that she never makes the same mistake twice. But the cliché more aptly applies to her than to just about anyone else. It is remarkable the degree to which the episode seems to have taught Clinton about how power is wielded in Washington.

Even though she had so badly wanted to recast the job of first lady into a serious public post befitting her intellect, Clinton instead retreated into the traditional role of hostess and symbol, performing endless ceremonial tasks with determined aplomb. She had arrived in Washington ready to be a copresident. Now she was reduced to organizing a collection of children's letters to Socks and Buddy, the White House pets.

Her colleagues emphasize that she did not abandon her policy role, and she herself made this point to me forcefully, still unwilling to yield that last shred of dignity. But even the work she did was a concession of sorts to her political radioactivity, focusing on such topics as children's and women's rights, and funding for the arts—important issues for which Clinton had long showed a genuine passion but that nevertheless are thought of as safely "first-lady material" in the chauvinistic reckoning of the capital. The fact that many of her public appearances at this time were on foreign trips only underscored the sense that she was still considered a liability.

Clinton stoically accepted the role as the price of readmission. But she also began developing the political style that would become a signature of her Senate career. One of her more public endeavors was the 1997 Adoption and Safe Families Act, which removed barriers to adoption. Clinton arranged to join with Representative Tom DeLay of Texas, a hard-edged conservative and varsity Clinton foe who, as a foster parent, is passionately concerned with such policies. If Clinton didn't realize going in what a burst of good publicity this pairing would yield—although she must have known how political reporters swoon for "odd couple" stories—she certainly did afterward.

Clinton told me that she never considered pursuing elected office until 1998, after Moynihan, New York's senior senator, announced he would retire at the end of his term. The official version of how it happened, presented in her book and repeated with eerie word-for-word precision whenever she's asked about it publicly, is a saccharine tale in which Clinton attends an event to promote an HBO special on women in sports and finds herself standing alongside a young woman so excited by the rumors of her possible candidacy that she leans into Clinton and repeats the day's fortifying slogan: "Dare to compete, Mrs. Clinton! Dare to compete!"

The decision became easier—or at least victory seemed more probable—after Clinton found herself the unexpected

beneficiary of glowing coverage during the Monica Lewinsky scandal, which broke early in 1998. As the wronged but dignified spouse, Clinton won public sympathy, and her favorability ratings soared. This must have been a disquieting experience. Clinton had always prided herself on her brains and talent, and now found herself rehabilitated largely for reasons owing nothing to them.

In her campaign for the Senate, Clinton took nothing for granted. Someone who worked closely with her told me that the Clintons' decision to live in Chappaqua rather than New York City derived in part from polling information showing that New York's conservative upstate denizens were more willing to support a Democrat from the suburbs than one from the city, which summoned images of heavy-spending liberalism. Her campaign was a triumph of bite-size policy proposals like the adoption bill she'd introduced with DeLay, all extensively poll-tested by her senior adviser, Mark Penn, who had helped right the listing White House ship after the 1994 elections with just this kind of strategy. In his book *Hillary's Turn*, the definitive word on her 2000 campaign, Michael Tomasky dubbed Clinton "The Laundry Lady" for her style of speech making, which consisted mainly of a seemingly endless list of modest, unobjectionable policies—she called it "the school of smaller steps." By the time she was sworn in, Clinton was substantially transfigured: she was humble, deferential, and, at last, victorious.

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If you're a freshman set on succeeding in the Senate—not just on winning reelection but on gaining a position of power within the institution—you must submit to the ritual of being continuously judged by the seniors you're trying to impress. It's a lot like pledging a fraternity: you make a big show of deference by abasing yourself before your elders. You summon awestruck words to describe the honor of being admitted to this august body, and you adopt the local idiom ("I rise to second my distinguished colleague"). You maintain a record of diligent attendance at hearings and plow through committee work uncomplainingly, which means that if you do not already possess one, you develop a towering threshold for boredom. At press conferences you speak last, patiently observing hierarchy, head nodding thoughtfully while the seniors gas off to the cameras and microphones. If you're already famous you tread very, very carefully, because your mere presence threatens to outshine the grasping, steroidally overdeveloped egos that command the Senate. And if—heaven forbid!—you are suspected of harboring presidential ambitions, you bury them like a

painful childhood secret. Depending on the mood and the time of day, anywhere from a plurality to a supermajority of your colleagues harbor the same goal.

Hillary Clinton was no one's obvious bet to succeed at this game. But she seems to have decided to conduct herself almost point by point in response to her failures in her husband's administration. Before she was even sworn in, she went to pay obeisance to the very man who had all but driven a stake through her health-care plan, Senator Robert C. Byrd. Smart move. "I was not exactly a disciple," Byrd told me. "I thought she would play upon her having been a president's wife and expect to have a lot of favors done, a lot of bending and bowing." He added huffily, "That didn't concur with my impression of what a senator should be."

Instead, Clinton asked Byrd for advice on being a good senator, and got a primer on how to comport herself. Afterward, she announced her intention to heed Byrd's advice: "Be a workhorse, not a show horse." (Surprisingly, I found that he said the same thing in 1973 to a fresh-faced young senator named Joe Biden—proof that, however well intentioned, advice doesn't always take.)

The meeting with Byrd accomplished two things: it sent a public signal about how Clinton planned to conduct herself in her new job, and it sent a private signal to Byrd that she wanted to apprentice herself to him. A Senate staffer told me that Clinton also asked Byrd at the meeting if he would lead a series of classes for the freshmen, which she would arrange, on his specialty of parliamentary rules and procedures. Byrd delightedly agreed. For more than a year, groups of senators large and small filed through Byrd's ornate office in the Capitol for their lessons. There was no question who was the star pupil.

Clinton made a big impression on Byrd, but she didn't get what she wanted right away. When she tried enlisting his help to gain a seat on the Appropriations Committee, she was rebuffed. But the apprentice had studied hard. One afternoon Byrd was meeting with staff in his office beneath the Senate chamber when a knock came at the door. It was Clinton, and with a companion. She apologized for dropping by unannounced, but she was just walking by and, well—"Senator Byrd, I wanted you to meet my mother. She just *loves* to listen to your speeches on Mother's Day!" The three fell into eager conversation.

Clinton has kept up the role of courtier throughout her term, nourishing Byrd's vanity with flattery and deference. A prominent early supporter of the Iraq War, she nevertheless nominated Byrd for the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute's Four Freedoms Award, which he won for his outspoken opposition to the war. To get an idea of what a big deal this sort of thing is to Byrd, consider that his 2005 autobiography painstakingly details what must be every honor he has ever received, a topic of remarkably little interest to just

about anyone else. Yet it fails to mention in its 817 pages the historic Clinton health-care plan. In *Living History*, Clinton absolves him of even his ruinous refusal to attach it to the reconciliation bill: "In retrospect and based on my service in the Senate, I agree with his assessment."

Byrd features significantly in Clinton's two biggest accomplishments in the Senate. The day after September 11, she surveyed the devastation at Ground Zero with New York's other senator, Charles Schumer. Realizing the need for federal help, she called Byrd first thing the next morning. "We're in real trouble, and it's going to take a lot to put the city back together. Can you help?" This time Byrd agreed at once: "Count me as the third senator from New York." With his assistance on the Appropriations Committee, New York secured \$20 billion in recovery funds, and Clinton likely cinched her reelection.

The other major accomplishment involved the Pentagon's list of recommended military-base closures, announced last May, which included the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station, one of the largest employers in a depressed area of the state. From her seat on the Armed Services Committee, Clinton played a prominent role in fighting the decision of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC), and found Byrd a useful ally. West Virginia's Air National Guard base had also been targeted for closure. Late one Friday night while preparing an appeal, a Byrd staffer came across an obscure 1917 statute denying the federal government the authority to close a National Guard base without authorization from the state's governor—which, if he valued his job, would never be forthcoming. Byrd's staff tipped off Clinton's, since New York's appeal hearing came sooner. Through her work on Armed Services, Clinton had developed close relationships with several Air Force sources at the Pentagon, and got hold of a document showing that the savings claimed for closing the Niagara station had been grossly exaggerated. Clinton personally laid out the information to the BRAC chairman, Anthony Principi. In September, word came from the White House that New York had been spared.

The spectacle made of Clinton's arrival on the Hill reflected her dual status as global celebrity and junior senator. She was assigned temporary office space in the dingy basement storage area of a Senate office building, which soon overflowed with staff. The accommodations were such that one day, when Brownback was ushered into Clinton's office for a meeting, he found himself in a windowless closet. Just outside, the eager media waited to document the new arrival's every move and utterance: not an altogether unfamiliar scene for Clinton, but a bit of a shock to those accustomed to the normally staid corridors of Congress. "You couldn't go anywhere without six TV cameras and a horde of reporters," one Clinton aide told me. "There were times when we literally could not walk down the hall, there was so much media."

Despite this chaos, Clinton managed to insinuate herself into the inner culture of the Senate almost immediately. Her operating belief seems to have been that the more her colleagues saw and knew of her, the more they would like her.

This has indeed been the case. Almost every senator—especially every Republican—has a story of an early encounter with Clinton that, like Byrd's and Brownback's, invariably emphasizes the disparity between what they thought she would be like and what they saw when they actually met her.

Often Clinton's dogged outgoingness—itsself a subversion of her caricature—worked to reverse these old impressions, or pushed incidental encounters into prosperous partnerships. One of Clinton's most enthusiastic and least likely fans is Senator Lindsey Graham, the South Carolina Republican who, when he was still a congressman, served as one of the most energetic managers of her husband's impeachment.

Some of these odd-couple partnerships have their roots in symbiotic benefit: Rick Santorum, Newt Gingrich, and Bill Frist all made common cause with Clinton as a means of moderating their partisan image, just as she has used alliances with previous conservative critics to moderate hers. But Clinton has also displayed a subtler touch in the Senate than anyone could reasonably have expected, making especially good use of the ever-dwindling opportunities for casual commingling of members of the opposing parties. The Wednesday-morning prayer group is one. Another is the congressional delegation ("CODEL," in Hill jargon), on which members travel together and wind up spending lots of time in close proximity. The story of one such trip, to Estonia, recently brought to light by *The New York Times*, gives a flavor of what Clinton is like in these settings. At a casual dinner with Senate colleagues Graham, John McCain, and Susan Collins, all Republicans, the waiter followed local custom by bringing a bottle of vodka and shot glasses, whereupon Clinton reached over and began pouring; a drinking contest ensued. McCain's staff seemed pained by the revelation, and declined my request for an interview, because the last thing a Republican presidential hopeful wants floating around in the media is word that he's becoming booze pals with Hillary Clinton. And McCain denied the story to Jay Leno. But when I recently intercepted him walking through the Capitol, McCain lit up at the recollection. "It's been fifty years since I'd been in a drinking game," said McCain, who as a former naval aviator knows whereof he speaks. He added, admiringly, "She can really hold her liquor."

It's not often talked about, but the Senate, more than any other body in Washington, remains stubbornly rooted in an earlier time. The fact of being a woman at any level is an added burden, in a way you don't often see anymore. Some vestigial notion of southern gentility, along with the advanced years and feudal powers of its senior members, fosters an atmosphere of sexism that is still passed off as "courtliness" or "fondness for the traditions of the Senate." Some female staffers ruefully call it "the last plantation." Clinton's arrival has had a curious effect.

Until he was deposed in 2002 as majority leader, Trent Lott favored a lipstick-and-skirt dress code. Women still must cover their blouses with jackets in order to set foot on the Senate floor. (There was a big fuss this summer about whether they could wear open-toed shoes.) Far from being

just quaint notions, these outdated standards of decorum are enforced by "bench ladies," who are stationed on the floor. Staffers call them the "SS guards" behind their backs.

These indignities reach every level. Male senators have always had access to a private restroom just off the Senate floor. But for decades, the few women senators had to walk down two floors to use a public restroom. On certain committees, such as Armed Services (of which Clinton is a member), this culture is said to be particularly intense. One veteran female committee aide said that for years certain lobbyists—retired military types with a Tailhook attitude toward gender differences—refused even to speak to her.

Years of accumulated resentments over such slights have helped form one very significant dimension of Clinton's strong working relationships in the Senate: her popularity among female staff members—even many Republicans—is almost universal. Something entirely unexpected happened as I went around inquiring about her working habits. Republican women, who are supposed to despise Clinton by reflex, would first describe seething as they sat behind their boss at some hearing or other and watched Clinton charm which-ever beacon of conservatism was her target. But many eventually went on to confess a grudging admiration for her, for reasons that initially struck me as bizarre. "She wore slacks to her swearing-in ceremony," one such staffer marveled. "I mean, you just don't *do* that in the Senate." Her point was that Clinton has flourished in the male-dominated milieu without making the normal concessions demanded of women, and has done so—this is important if you're a Republican—without making a big feminist stink about it.

But Clinton hasn't so much exploded gender stereotypes as subtly exploited them. She has completely erased from her public persona any resentment she may still feel at her treatment during the White House years. When senators appear together at a press conference it is often possible to make out, just at the moment things are really getting under way, a minuet taking place—the statesmanlike jockeying for primacy of position before the cameras. Clinton, as fellow senators admiringly pointed out to me, is the only one who routinely steps backward and defers to her colleagues.

History having cast Clinton as aloof and hard-edged, it was no accident that early reports of her private meetings with her new colleagues often included revelatory details that cut against character type, such as her offering to pour coffee for her male seniors. As one of her (male) aides bragged, "You don't expect the first lady of the United States to ask if you want two lumps of sugar." In submitting to the institutional culture, though, Clinton has sublimated her power drive, not denied it.

Clinton is one of perhaps three senators whose celebrity transcends the bounds of the capital and suffuses the broader culture. John McCain and Barack Obama are the other two, but neither man has suffered the kind of public humiliation that Clinton has endured, and that induces the sense of strong personal connection millions of regular people develop for celebrities with genuine problems.

Last fall, Oprah Winfrey asked Clinton to present her with a lifetime-achievement award from the International Emmys. I went to New York City to watch. Given the scarcity of political reporters on the trip (just me), I was thrown in with the paparazzi, who were penned down the hall from the ceremony in a room that featured a small stage, where winners would pose for pictures after picking up their trophies. True to stereotype, there were many burly Italian photographers toting small stepladders who thought nothing of shoving everyone else aside to get a good shot. A woman explained that Oprah and Hillary were the two top celebrities (in that order) at the event, and a good shot of them together could fetch about \$10,000 (women's magazines adore them). But the prevailing mood was one of frustration, because rumor had it that the two would not be posing together. After Clinton presented Oprah with her award (we watched on closed-circuit television) there built up first a quiet and then a very loud commotion as two figures approached the press room down the long hallway. In a great burst of flashbulbs, Oprah led Hillary onstage, Emmy in one hand, Hillary's hand gripped in the other, the two of them radiant in their ball gowns and waving for several electric seconds. Then Oprah hoisted Hillary's hand in triumph like a referee at a prizefight, and the whole place erupted. It sounds corny, but it was really exciting!

The event was a reminder of just how far Clinton's status stretches into worlds beyond her Senate colleagues, and what a powerful instrument fame can be. A large part of Clinton's popularity is explained by how skillfully she has put this celebrity to work on behalf of her New York constituents. When she took office, Clinton held what was essentially an executive-branch view of governing. During the campaign she had pledged to create 200,000 jobs for the ailing upstate economy through a seven-part economic plan, the first piece of legislation she introduced. It didn't get far. "We quickly came to the realization that the Republican Congress wasn't going to give her a break," Kris Balderston, her primary adviser on upstate economic matters, explains. Freshmen have almost no legislative muscle. So she turned to an altogether different style of politics.

Clinton's staff often talks of her "power to convene"—her ability as "Hillary Clinton, former first lady of the United States" to bring together almost anyone and instill a desire to please her and feel part of a great enterprise. In this way she has been able to operate like a popular big-city mayor. Both Clintons love fashioning imaginative programs that nurture partnerships, create new markets, or add value to existing enterprises. Clinton has used her extra-legislative superpower to help spur the creation of a medical cluster in Syracuse, new defense technology in the state's Central Corridor, even artists' lofts in abandoned Buffalo buildings. When she appeared on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*, she requested that the band play "Erie Canal" when she appeared, giving her a musical opening to plug upstate tourism, which she did.

One of New York's biggest industries, somewhat surprisingly, is agriculture. Here, again, Clinton has characteristically thrown herself into the prime advocate's role through the



classically Clintonian “Farm to Fork” program she created, which seeks to link upstate farming with downstate markets. To boost sales of New York wine, she piled New York City restaurateurs into a plane and led them on a tour of Finger Lakes wineries. When upstate apple growers complained that China and Canada were flooding the market with imported apples, Clinton attacked foreign apples, pushing for mandatory “country of origin” stickers that would identify apples grown in New York. When bad weather damaged the crop, Clinton sent former Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman a rotten Hudson Valley apple and a plea for federal disaster funds. Nothing is too small or obscure to arouse her passionate interest. “I remember listening to a conversation at some black-tie event where she was talking about what you should feed to pigs,” Maggie Williams says. “If you fed them a certain kind of food, they produced better meat. We were in an extremely social setting, but she seemed perfectly intent on talking about it because it had to do with some upstate issue. I kind of felt like, um, do we really have to talk about this here?”

The quantitative effects of all this are negligible, considering the scope of the problems her state faces: New York has lost 65,000 jobs in the six years she has represented it. But the psychological benefits of her upstate attentions have been tremendous. It’s as if the prom queen had wandered over unbidden during lunch to insist on sitting with the kids from shop class and asked them to explain drop presses. Clinton never came close to adding 200,000 jobs upstate. Her popularity stems instead from sheer, bludgeoning persistence and an eager willingness to spread her glamour over an area with little of its own.

Any senator who entertains thoughts of the presidency inevitably comes up against doing what is best for her state or doing what is best for her country. Nothing highlights this more sharply than Congress’s effort this year to rewrite the Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency (CARE) Act, a federal program that provides states with money to fight the spread of the disease. When the law first passed, in 1990, AIDS was ravaging cities, which properly received the preponderance of assistance. In the years since, urban areas—often with help from the states—have worked to bring AIDS cases under control. In New York, all patients

who qualify under the act have access to the drug cocktails that can prevent HIV infections from becoming full-blown AIDS—with enough money left over to pay for quality-of-life services like dog walking and massage therapy.

Now AIDS is exploding across the rural South, especially in black areas, leaving some states unable to afford even the basic life-saving drugs. Some experts believe that the funding formula needs to be rewritten to address where the disease is newly spreading. In August, news accounts revealed that Clinton was holding up the writing of legislation. I was leaked documents from her office stamped CONFIDENTIAL showing Clinton’s proposed funding formula, which maintained New York’s high level of funding. When I asked her about entreaties from pastors’ groups and rural-state governors, who were concerned that their citizens would not receive essential medication, Clinton assured me that she hoped funding would be increased wherever it was needed—knowing how implausible this hope might be. She would not sacrifice her state’s allotment of money.

While she has been fitting herself into the Senate, Clinton has risen to become the dominant figure in Washington’s Democratic establishment. In its ideology, the Democratic Party has moved a long way since the Clintons came to Washington in 1993. The Clinton administration succeeded over its eight years in moving the party’s center away from the balkanized, liberal attitudinizing of the 1980s and toward something much closer to the American mainstream. There remain plenty of intraparty differences on the war, trade policy, and the like. But the terms of argument themselves are more or less where Bill Clinton worked to get them.

Most of the intellectual energy within the Democratic establishment today is directed at infrastructure, not ideology. Having watched reasonably moderate candidates lose the last two presidential elections in heartbreaking fashion, and feeling further frustrated by the steady failure to win either house of Congress, Democrats have made it an article of faith that they lack the political and policy mechanisms to compete with their Republican counterparts. Over the last few years they have moved to restore the balance by building up institutions of their own. More than anyone

else—certainly more than any other elected official—Hillary Clinton has been central to this process, taking a hand in almost every new Democratic institution.

Clinton helped John Podesta found a think tank, the Center for American Progress, which serves as a kind of Democratic administration-in-waiting. She has supported another, the American Democracy Institute, run by veteran Clinton allies. She has advised a watchdog group, Media Matters for America, that keeps tabs on the vast right-wing conspiracy and is run by David Brock, the reborn conservative hatchet man who helped launch the Paula Jones scandal before he renounced his past and became a liberal activist. Clinton has also advised the Democracy Alliance, an organization of the party's richest donors that is aiming to raise \$200 million for party-building efforts. While each group purports to work for the Democratic Party generally, and will support the next presidential nominee regardless of who it may be, among the possible contenders Clinton is at the very least the first among equals.

The only place where Clinton lacks a strong hand is the Democratic National Committee, chaired by Howard Dean, and here her supporters have simply worked around the problem. The big advantage that the DNC will try to offer candidates in 2008 is access to a huge database of voter information, a level of technological power now considered crucial to winning races. Having no friend in Dean, and skeptical of his abilities, the Clinton camp allowed a longtime ally, Harold Ickes Jr., to raise money to set up a private version of that database for use in the likely event that Clinton runs.

Bill Clinton's long tenure as president and the fact that no figure has risen to replace him have given birth to a professional class of Washington Democrats who both reflect the thinking of and feel intensely loyal to the former president—and, by extension, his wife. Al Gore might have been another claimant to such a heritage, but he rejected it, and never engendered anything like the visceral loyalty so many Democrats still feel for Clinton. At least in Washington, it's Hillary Clinton's party now.

What this means in practical terms is that she commands almost all the top talent. With rare exceptions, she can lay claim to the best fund-raisers, political operatives, pollsters, and media consultants—often several of each. Clinton's ascendancy over the party is such that one prominent adviser to her told me that his biggest concern in the near term was "a Noah's Ark problem": there are more people loyal to her than her campaign could reasonably employ. Though Clinton faces no serious challenger in her Senate race, she has already raised almost \$50 million; should she run for president, insiders say that she could raise \$400 million—over \$100 million more than George W. Bush raised for his reelection.

This show of strength highlights a disparity between the Democratic Party as it exists in Washington, with Clinton the regnant power, and in the rest of the country, where the party has yet to decide who that power should be. And, oddly, it does not necessarily reflect any confidence, even in Washington, that Clinton can win the presidency. A number of mid-level Democratic operatives—the kind who could expect a

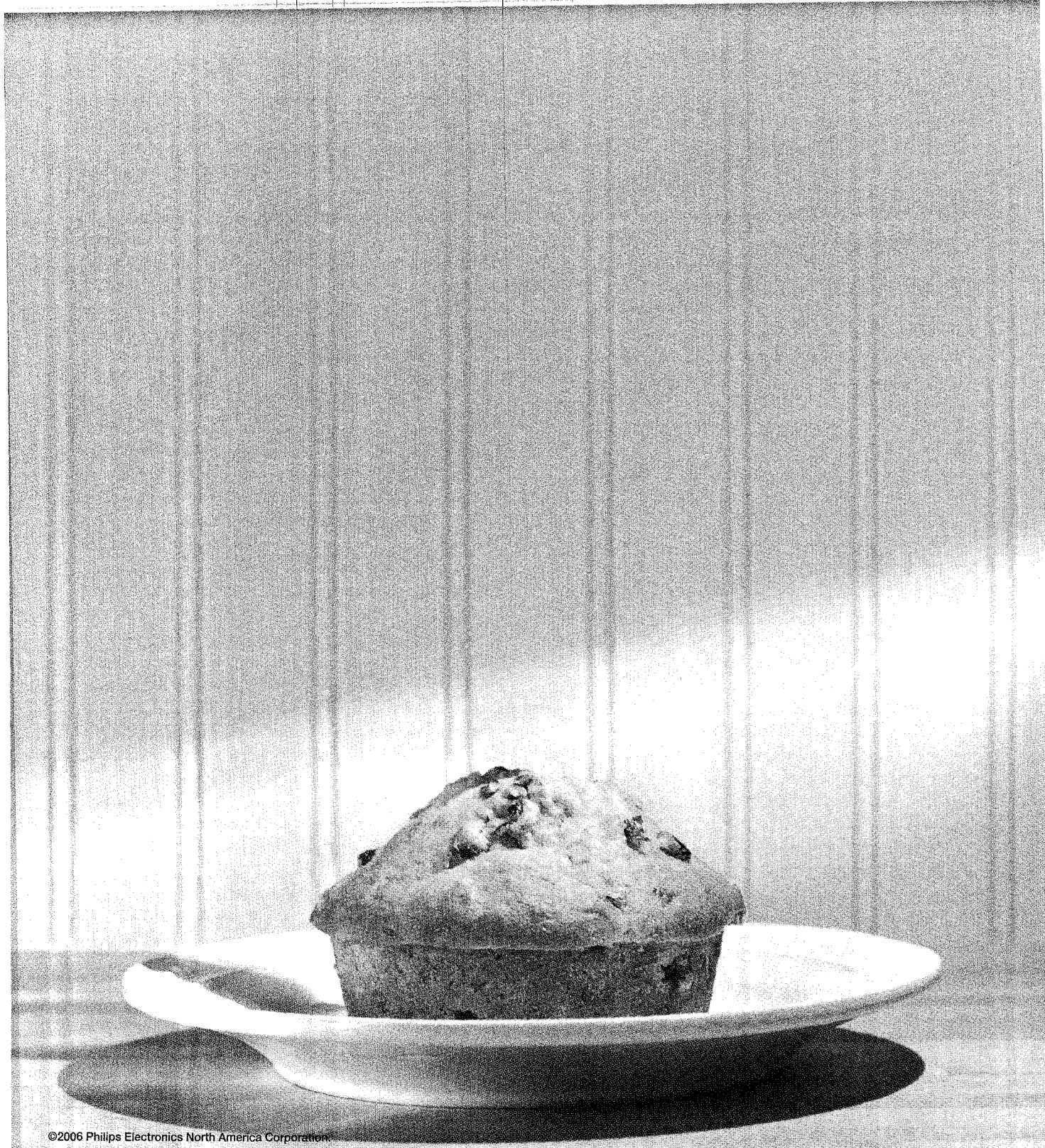
good job in any Democratic administration—told me they didn't believe she could win a general election, especially against a popular Republican like McCain. But at the same time, they did not entertain the possibility of working for another Democratic candidate. "It's simple, really," one of them explained to me. "Bill Clinton made my career—I wouldn't be who I am, in the job I'm in, if he hadn't made me. There's no way I could ever work against Hillary." He was conflicted about this, as are many others. It sounded as though he and his colleagues would rather cede the race than work against Bill Clinton's wife.

When Hillary Clinton and I sat down to talk in New York City, we had come, separately, from an event at which she had spoken to a group that honors 9/11 victims by asking people to do good deeds in remembrance of the dead. It took place in the cheerful headquarters of the children's-book publisher Scholastic, which made for an unlikely setting. The nurturing, pastel-carpeted room, with its wall of children's books—*The Adventures of Captain Underpants (Collectors' Edition)* and, just above the press section, *Piranhas and Other Fish*—and the civic-minded audience, gathered to celebrate earnest acts of goodwill, offered the outward appearance of being the perfect Hillary Clinton environment. It was, but not for the reasons I expected.

The somber occasion brought forth a side of Clinton rarely seen in Washington. It was the only time I saw her move a crowd. Clinton looked weary and spoke with haggard fixity about the "long-term struggles against the forces of darkness and nihilism," the need to "constantly be standing on the side of life." Then she looked up appraisingly at the gathering, which included some of the people with whom she has worked most closely during her six years in office. Her tone changed. She spoke about the fallen brother of one of the group's organizers. His favorite movie had been *It's a Wonderful Life*, and she quoted the angel Clarence: "Each man's life touches so many other lives. When he isn't around, he leaves an awful hole, doesn't he?" That hole can never be filled." No one applauded when she was finished. The small nods and squeezed hands of those in the audience conveyed a deeper kind of thanks.

Clinton spoke briefly to the bereaved, then headed uptown. When she arrived at the hotel restaurant she flashed a smile of businesslike sociability, and we sat down. I began by mentioning the event and asked how 9/11 had shaped her Senate term. "I felt this overwhelming sense of loss, and commitment and obligation to do everything I could do, and that's basically what I've tried to do in the last five years," she replied. "It was very fortunate for us in New York that Senator Byrd was chairman of the Appropriations Committee, that Tom Daschle was still the majority leader because of Jim Jeffords walking across the aisle, so we had a tremendous amount of sympathy from our colleagues, and that was enormously helpful." Then she added a swipe: "The Republicans were ready to fight a war but not necessarily rebuild New York."

This last bit was unprovoked and an apparently conscious effort, maintained throughout the interview, to come



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across as sweepingly critical—even angry—about the war. Clinton is prominent among the top Democrats who voted to support Bush’s resolution and who are now furiously trying to backpedal without recanting their votes. A popular dodge is to declare that the president exceeded the authority Congress granted him and allowed the war to become a distraction from the fight against terrorism, and to then express surprise that he could act so irresponsibly.

I asked whether Bush’s decision to go to war was really something she didn’t expect at the time. “Well, I’ve said that he ‘misused’ the authority granted to him,” she replied. “When I spoke at the time of the vote I made it very clear that this was not a vote for preemptive war; this was a vote, I thought, that would enable diplomacy to succeed because we would have a unified front between the president and our Congress to go to the Security Council to try to get the inspectors back in. Obviously we now know, in retrospect, that the president and vice president and his team probably didn’t intend for the inspectors to do their work.”

Most people correctly foresaw the vote as authorization for Bush to invade Iraq. Did she really mean to suggest she had not been among them? “Well, I think that’s right,” she said, affecting total ignorance, and then launched into a point-by-point defense of the position. “That’s what Bush said in his speech in Cincinnati on October 7th. They called me to the White House on October 8th and gave me another briefing. When I got back to my office, Condi Rice called me and asked if I had any questions. I said, ‘Look, I have one question: If the president has this authority, will he go to the United Nations and use it to get inspectors to go back into Iraq and figure out what this guy has?’ [Rice replied,] ‘Yes, that’s what it’s for.’ Privately and publicly, that was the argument they were making.”

She returned to blaming Bush, with her familiar charge that he had withheld intelligence about the locations of possible weapons of mass destruction from the UN inspectors. Then she made a final, sustained push to get away from her decision and onto the safer terrain of the administration’s execution of its mandate: “And, you know, it was also hard to believe that they would be so foolhardy and shortsighted as to do something without adequate preparation.”

Did she feel that Bush lied to her? “I feel like he”—pause—“misled the Congress and the country.” Intentionally? “I don’t know about ‘intentionally.’ I don’t know what Bush knew. I honestly don’t know. I think he is surrounded by people who limit his access to information. I believe that you could have taken the major players in this drama in the Bush administration and they would have passed polygraphs about what they believed the threat was, because they were so obsessed with what [Saddam Hussein] had done before, and the potential for what he could do again.”

Clinton’s answers to questions about the war can be fugue-like in their complexity, and often assume a processional quality: the laundry lady, pinning up every fact, every conversation, every tidbit of exculpatory evidence for public display, attempting to disappear behind a screen of detail. Clinton harbors no illusion that her war vote will be any-

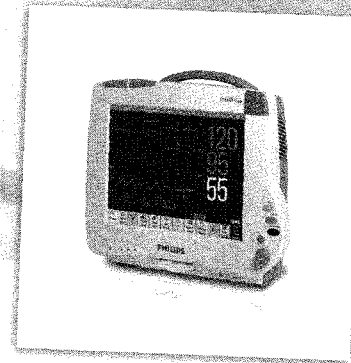
thing less than a serious problem should she choose to seek the Democratic nomination. That’s why she works so hard at her public testimony. For a growing segment of the party, the sin of having authorized the war is not an issue on which one’s position can simply be readjusted—it’s one of inextinguishable moral trespass with the potential to engulf any race. On the day we met, the political world was consumed with the fallout from the Connecticut Democratic Senate primary, where the three-term incumbent, Joe Lieberman, had fallen to an upstart challenger, Ned Lamont, largely over the issue of the war. Lieberman, like Clinton, had voted for it, so I asked her to explain her position and why the same voter animosity might not be directed at her.

Here is her full answer:

I think our positions are *very* different. We may have cast the same vote, [but] I was not standing in the Rose Garden with George Bush announcing the desire to go into Iraq. I have been a consistent critic of the way they conducted the war, and I was pleasantly surprised to see Tom Ricks referring to my questioning of Paul Wolfowitz in his book [*Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*]. You know, I’m reading his book, feeling depressed, and I get to page 385, I think it is, and it says, “Finally the Democrats began to go after people,” and he has a page about my questioning of Wolfowitz. So I have consistently gone after the administration, and I worked with my Democratic colleagues, first in November, then in June, to craft a Democratic response. I thought both times we did a good job, and Lieberman didn’t vote for it either time. So we have very different positions. It is indisputable that we both voted to give Bush authority. But what we thought we were voting for, and what Bush eventually did, and then how we have responded since, I think, is really distinctive between us.

This was pure Hillary Clinton: the clear-eyed avowal of innocence, succinct and perfectly composed like a college-application essay; the flawless elocution; the slyly purposeful language (“... a *consistent* critic” ... “I have *consistently* gone after ...”); the “offhand” reference to a page-specific vindicating instance—right, of course. On big issues like the war, Washington judges you not by whether you were right or wrong—at least not in the short term—but by how systematically and formidably you maintain your position. Get caught skating in circles (“I voted for the \$87 billion before I voted against it”), and you’re finished. Clinton’s position on the war may feel like justification after the fact for a decision that is coming to look much worse in hindsight. But over the last four years she has managed, with lawyerly precision and in politically acceptable gradations, to shift from a stance of Thatcherite fortitude before the war to one of betrayed dismay and anger at the Bush administration afterward without any jarring breach of consistency or abrupt shift in direction. When the judges are scoring you on form, that’s like landing a triple Lutz.

When Clinton prepares to answer a reporter’s question, there’s a split-second pause when you can almost see her



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imagining, in floating cartoon bubbles above her head, the worst-case headline that a candid answer could yield, and then pitching her reply in the least-objectionable terms. Several of her friends told me that they believed her to be genuinely happy in the Senate, liberated in a way she never was able to be as first lady—an impression I developed as well. I asked which job she liked better, and she replied that they were very different and that she liked them both. (*Washington Post*: “Clinton Denounces First Lady Role.”) I asked how she compared her political strengths and weaknesses to her husband’s, now that she’d served a full term in the Senate, citing Podesta’s observation that she was a disciplined, deep thinker. Clinton visibly recoiled: “I don’t talk about that.” (*New York Times*: “Clinton Calls Husband ‘Shallow,’ ‘Undisciplined.’”) Retreating to safer territory, I wondered how she had displaced the legitimate anger she surely felt when she was in the White House toward some of her current colleagues. “I had a job to do,” was the considered reply. (*New York Post*: “HIL STILL AIMS TO KILL!”)

The only question that seemed to throw her concerned her actual Senate record. After we’d gone through her positions and policies in some detail, I suggested that for all she’d been busy doing in the Senate, I couldn’t find an instance where she had taken a politically unpopular stance or championed a big idea, like health-care reform, that might not yield immediate benefits but was the right thing to do.

Clinton’s answers to questions about the war often assume a processional quality: the laundry lady, pinning up every fact, every conversation, every tidbit of exculpatory evidence for public display.

Interviews with colleagues and observers seemed to imply an unspoken disappointment that her talents promised a record of more height and substance than she had displayed. The one consistent criticism I heard was that her record was marked by overwhelming caution. Could she refute their doubts, and point to a few examples of politically brave votes?

Clinton laughed. “Oh, well, see, my view is, how do you get things done? When you’re in the minority, getting things done is not easy.” She cited her work after September 11: “I think taking on the administration over the effects from breathing the contaminants that were in the air, fighting to get the tracking and screening programs set up, going back time and time again—”

I couldn’t help breaking in. These were certainly worthy programs, but where is the political risk in standing up for the victims of September 11?

She tried again: “I voted against every tax cut, and I represent the richest people in America.”

But you’re a Democrat!

“But I have a lot of constituents for whom those tax cuts were personally quite important.”

Aren’t they Republicans?

“I had no support in the financial-services community when I ran in 2000—none,” she replied, rather reinforcing the point. “That’s a slight exaggeration—I have worked really hard to develop credibility with them, but I have voted against their tax cuts, I have voted against repealing the estate tax, I took on Alan Greenspan at a hearing about his appearance before the budget committee.”

I was about to suggest that these might qualify as politically brave actions for a *Republican*, when her answer took a sharp turn toward the personal.

“Everything I do carries political risk because nobody gets the scrutiny that I get,” she said finally. “It’s not like I have any margin for error whatsoever. I don’t. Everybody else does, and I don’t. And that’s fine. That’s just who I am, and that’s what I live with.”

Hillary Clinton is viewed through the lens of her larger ambition—and ambition is definitely there. Though she has always downplayed the issue, Clinton apparently flirted with running for the presidency in the 2004 election. According to one insider, in 2003 Mark Penn had created a unit within the polling firm of Penn, Schoen & Berland so clandestine that most of the staff didn’t even know it existed. It operated in a room whose computers had been disconnected from the company’s network. Penn polled to find out whether Clinton could break her pledge to serve

a full term in the Senate and still maintain enough political viability to run for president. (Penn wouldn’t confirm—or deny—this episode, and said he believed that “at no time was she ever leaning in that direction.”) Ultimately, of course, she chose not to. But she must have been tempted. “Some very important people were coming to her on bended knee asking her to run,” a close friend of Clinton’s told me. “That was the phrase she used: ‘on bended knee.’”

This past July, Clinton was the keynote speaker at the Democratic Leadership Council’s annual conference in Denver. Her appearance at such a resonant event heightened speculation that she is preparing to run. The DLC was formed after Walter Mondale’s landslide loss to Ronald Reagan in the 1984 election, to guide the party back to the political center. Bill Clinton chaired the organization when he was governor of Arkansas, and it served as a crucial vehicle in his advance to the presidency.

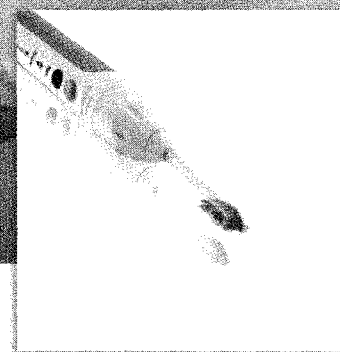
If you were studying how to get elected president, and you had examined Bill Clinton, you might, as he did, give a series of national policy speeches that, taken together, shape a platform right before the political class’s eyes. Hillary Clinton has done this. You would seek as best you could to position yourself as far as possible from the party’s



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leftward fringe. Hillary Clinton has done this, too, recalibrating when necessary. And if you wanted people to draw a pointed comparison to his presidential campaign, you might give a speech, as Clinton did in Denver, laying out a positive, centrist, credibly detailed message that echoed a lot of what Bill Clinton had said—although you probably wouldn't go quite so far as to swipe his campaign's catchphrase, as Clinton did when she struck the refrain: "It's the American dream, stupid!"

Clinton has nothing like her husband's skill at delivering a speech. She doesn't dominate the room the way he does. Her political talent is precisely the opposite—she dominates in the Senate by yielding. She has a kind of anti-talent for hitting the right cadence, and her flat, midwestern voice lends itself poorly to impassioned exposition. When she tries to increase her register, it comes out as a sort of strained honk. An odd fact of Clinton's public persona, an implicit acknowledgment of this shortcoming, is her reliance on sentimental videos to connect with her audience—essentially outsourcing the emotional element of a speech. Video presentations were a key part of both her 2000 announcement speech and her second-term nomination-acceptance speech in Buffalo this past June, where she elicited little more than pro forma applause. Afterward, when the crowd rose to its feet and the luminaries onstage poured into the audience, she herself inexplicably disappeared. It was her husband who characteristically soaked in the mass adoration and shook hands until his aides dragged him away.

Clinton has done what traditionally must be done to win your party establishment's nomination for president. But her husband had the benefit of running as an outsider against a tired, intellectually listless Democratic Party. A lot has changed since then. The DLC, a band of outsiders twenty years ago, has become the veritable embodiment of what and who is connoted by the term *Democratic establishment*. Years of tireless study have made Hillary Clinton the consummate insider—but at a time when antiestablishment fervor in the Democratic base is at its highest point in a generation. It is not just her war vote but the very fact of being a Clinton that threatens her: an emerging liberal critique, especially virulent in the blogosphere, blames the Clintons and their self-absorption for the atrophy that has befallen the party. Clinton has reached the top of the Democratic establishment that once thwarted her. But that is looking like a less viable launching point to the presidency than at any time since she got to Washington.

There remains another option—one to which she is unquestionably well suited. As an admiring senator put it to me, "Hillary Clinton is everyone's secret choice for majority leader." It's a line you hear often on Capitol Hill, and it has two possible meanings. For some it's polite code for "Lord, I hope she doesn't run for president." But for others—I'd venture to say the majority—it is a compliment genuinely felt, an acknowledgment that she has satisfied the lions of the Senate and, should she wish to, might one day rank among them.

Clinton has overcome many unique obstacles to succeed in the Senate, but she has followed Washington's well-worn

path to power, acquiring patrons with a connoisseur's discerning eye. Those whose talents can keep pace with their ambition are always in need of new patrons as they move ahead. This inevitably means leaving old ones behind, and sometimes disillusioning them. Out of all the people I asked to talk to about Clinton for this article, only one person refused: Jay Rockefeller.

Even though the Democrats are in the minority, Byrd, as the ranking member of the Appropriations Committee, remains worth cultivating. His forty-eight-year career makes him the longest-serving senator in U.S. history: of the 1,885 people who have *ever* been in the Senate, Byrd has served alongside more than 400. Clinton, he tells aides, is among his very favorites. As I waited in the antechamber to his office, I noticed a letter atop the in-box on the desk thanking Byrd profusely for his help "funding key funding priorities for New York" in the fiscal year 2007 Homeland Security appropriations bill, and singling out each of his staffers for praise. The letter was signed, in looping cursive, simply, "Hillary." "I guess I'm blowing myself up a little," Byrd told me sheepishly, "but I think of her as a pupil of mine."

The story emerging from Clinton's top advisers about her Senate career, however, does not suggest a thirst to stay. They clearly and unequivocally assert that when she sets her mind to learning and doing something, she's successful—often against very long odds—and that she has proven to be a great leader for New York. If Clinton decides to run, this will be the theme of her campaign.

Her advisers try to give the impression that it's all they can do to keep up. "We recently tried to review what she did in the Senate," Penn told me, "and it took sixteen hours. And I don't think we covered it all. There are very few people I could sit down with for whom, even after thirty years, it would require sixteen hours to review all the bills and positions and the involvement in so many issues." When I remarked that most of the issues struck me as small-bore, he conceded as much, but insisted that they did not truly define Clinton. "In a Republican Senate, she has learned to gain ground a yard at a time," he said. "But she hasn't lost the ability to throw the long ball."

Yet it is fair to wonder if Clinton learned the lesson of the health-care disaster too well, whether she has so embraced caution and compromise that she can no longer judge what merits taking political risks. It is hard to square the brashly confident leader of health-care reform—willing to act on her deepest beliefs, intent on changing the political climate and not merely exploiting it—with the senator who recently went along with the vote to make flag-burning a crime. Today Clinton offers no big ideas, no crusading causes—by her own tacit admission, no evidence of bravery in the service of a larger ideal. Instead, her Senate record is an assemblage of many, many small gains. Her real accomplishment in the Senate has been to rehabilitate the image and political career of Hillary Rodham Clinton. Impressive though that has been in its particulars, it makes for a rather thin claim on the presidency. Senator Clinton has plenty to talk about, but she doesn't have much to say. ▀

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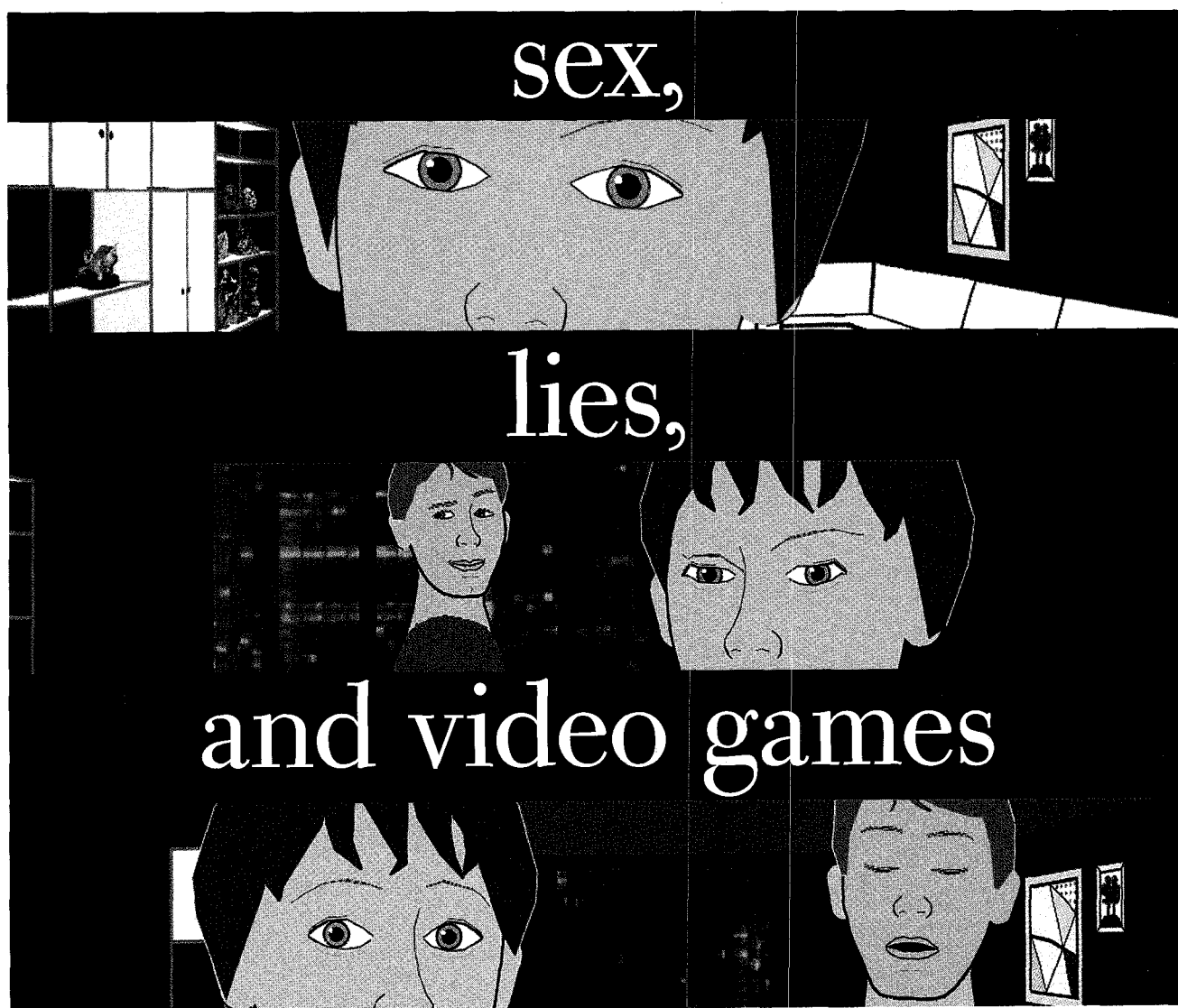
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What if a computer program combined the action and graphics of a video game with the emotional power of great art? The result could revolutionize interactive entertainment—and even change the meaning of “play”



Grace and Trip, from Façade

BY JONATHAN RAUCH

Michael Mateas is the sort of person who once built an artificially intelligent(ish) robot houseplant that monitored your e-mail and changed shape to reflect the mood of what it read—if that sort of person can be said to be a sort. This was in 1998, when Mateas was a doctoral student with some avant-garde ideas. *Office Plant #1*, as the creation was called, grew and shrank and blossomed and hibernated and waved its piano-wire fronds as it “fed” off e-mail traffic. Naturally, it also whistled, sang, moaned, and

complained. Not long after building *Office Plant #1*, however, Mateas set it aside. He became interested in bigger things, like creating a new art form.

Meanwhile, Andrew Stern, a programmer and designer at a now-defunct video-game studio, was building artificially intelligent(ish) virtual pets. They were called Petz, and for a while they were a hit in the video-game industry. First came Dogz, in 1995, then Catz, and eventually Babyz, all adorable animated creatures that lived on your computer’s hard drive. As Stern worked on

Jonathan Rauch is a correspondent for The Atlantic and a guest scholar at the Brookings Institution.

COURTESY ANDREW STERN

making the virtual creatures emotionally appealing and realistic to play with, he began giving them artificial minds: goals, personalities, memories. It dawned on him that he wanted to work with adult characters in lifelike relationships. He became interested in bigger things, like creating a new art form.

Not long after Petz debuted, Stern began attending some of the same conferences on artificial intelligence that Mateas haunted. It was probably inevitable that Stern, presenting his intelligent(ish) virtual pets, would run into Mateas, presenting his intelligent(ish) robot plant. It didn't take long for them to recognize each other as kindred spirits.

In certain rarefied circles of AI academia and video-game design, people sometimes theorize about a computer program that would combine the graphical realism of a modern video game with the emotional impact of great art. "Interactive drama," the concept is called. It might contain artificial people you could converse with, get to know, and love or hate. It might engineer dramatic situations, complete with revelations and reversals. Entering this world, you would feel as if you had been thrust into the midst of a soap opera or a reality-TV show.

"I had some idea how to do it," Stern says. Mateas, for his part, had dreamed since childhood of building artificial humans. It occurred to him that he could advance his dream by building artificial *actors*. What better way to teach a computer to act human, after all, than by teaching it to act?

In 1998, emerging from a hot tub at a conference in Snowbird, Utah, Mateas and Stern decided to collaborate. "As Andrew and I talked," Mateas recalls, "we sort of egged each other on to jump as far out of the mainstream as possible." They resolved to create a game that would put a *not* in front of every convention of today's video-game industry. They looked upon their game as a research project and figured that building it would take two years. It took more than five. Now they are starting on a larger version, this time a commercial game.

They think interactive drama has the potential to be to this century what cinema was to the last. When I spent a couple of days getting to know them recently, I asked why they're not trying something more modest, such as making the characters in today's video games more lifelike. "That's a sort of incremental innovation that I think neither of us is interested in," Mateas replied. "We're interested in revolutionary innovation."

If today's video-game industry were a person, it would be at what people used to call "that awkward age." Suddenly, like a teenager with long legs and short pants, it finds itself grossing \$31 billion this year in revenues worldwide, according to the business consultancy PricewaterhouseCoopers, and nearly \$10 billion in the United States alone. If the industry keeps up its growth, Pricewaterhouse expects it to rival the global recorded-music business by about 2010. Yet the video-game industry, for all its swagger and success, remains something of a niche player. In the United States, it is smaller than the theme-park and amusement-park industry; according to Pricewaterhouse, its rapid growth would still leave it, in 2010,

about a third the size of the film, radio, or book industry, and about a seventh the size of the television industry.

A lot of people play games now, and not just kids: the average gamer, according to the Entertainment Software Association, is thirty-three years old. But while just about everyone regularly listens to music or reads books or watches movies, many adults never pick up a joystick. Only about a seventh of game titles sold in 2005 were the racy or violent stuff that draws an *M* (for "mature") rating; the stereotype that video games are nothing but antisocial savagery is just that—a stereotype. Puzzles, pets, strategy games, and social games abound. But it's true that the adrenaline-pumping, youth-oriented genres dominate. According to the ESA, almost three-quarters of the best-selling games on the market are in the fighting, shooting, racing, action, and sports genres. A sexist commentator might call it boy stuff.

The graphics of the best modern games are stunning, and their "physics"—their power to create a world that feels real as you move about in it—hardly less so. But the industry is rife with game designers who complain of "sequelitis" and creative underachievement. "Will we address an excruciatingly audience-limiting lack of diversity in our content?" wondered Warren Spector, one of the industry's leading developers, in a recent article in *The Escapist*, a video-game magazine. "I can see us limiting ourselves to the same subset of adolescent male players we've always reached. And if we do that, it's back to the margins for us."

"There's no drama genre, there's no comedy genre," Andrew Stern told me recently. "What exists right now are action movies, basically." He might have added: *silent* action movies. The video-game industry's annual trade show in Los Angeles, called the Electronic Entertainment Expo, or E³ for short, is one of the loudest places I have ever been. Also one of the most silent.

This year's show occupied all of L.A.'s cavernous convention center. Its thousands of microprocessors and liquid-crystal displays and sound systems burned enough electricity to power a good-sized suburb. Take the crowds of Times Square, add the high-tech dazzle of Tokyo and the floor-shaking decibels of surround-sound cinema, throw in Vegas-style showgirls (known in the trade as "booth babes"), and you have some idea of E³.

Drifting through the show last May, I saw many shallow games and many derivative games: superheroes dueling with giant robots, skateboarders flashing Nike logos, boxers throwing punches amid showers of sweat and spittle, warriors trudging through jungles and snowscapes. Joining one particularly long line, I found myself in a small, darkened room where a designer was debuting Midway's John Woo Presents: Stranglehold. Fighters were demolishing everything in sight. "Look at the state of the teahouse, just massive destruction," said the designer lovingly. "And it never looks the same twice." As he emphasized how realistically each bullet splintered the walls, a male connoisseur in the audience called out, "Aim for the head!" (The audience in this demo, and at the show generally, was at least 80 percent male.) Even the schlock, however, exhibited striking craft

and ingenuity, and I came across some astonishingly imaginative games, including an alien-invasion shooter (Capcom's *Lost Planet: Extreme Condition*) whose visuals were so compelling that I was helpless to tear myself away.

It was only after I left the hall that I realized there was something odd about all the noise. The thunderous sound effects were masking the absence of conversation. In real life, much of what's interesting involves talking to people. The characters in games could deliver scripted lines like "I'm ready to kick some ass!" or drop prerecorded comments on the action, but conversing with me or each other was completely beyond them. It occurred to me that if video games seem inhuman, that is because they lack humans. Their esoteric syntax is an artifact of a stunted environment in which blasting someone's head off is easy but talking to him is impossible.

A month later, I asked Andrew Stern what he thinks of E³. "I shake my head a little," he replied. "All this effort and money being poured into all this derivative and uninspired work. I'm bored and slightly disgusted." Few in the mainstream industry would express disgust with their product, but many designers,

into any American crowd. Nonetheless, as the three of us talked it was Stern who emerged as the dominant personality, partly because he has an artist's fierce sense of aesthetic rectitude. Economy, elegance, formal coherence: these are personal matters to him.

Stern is thirty-six and lives in Portland, Oregon. He grew up in various cities along the East Coast. Mateas is forty and grew up in Carson City, Nevada. In some respects, their childhoods ran in parallel. Both discovered video games as children, in the 1970s, when the very first games appeared. They haunted the arcades in the malls; they pounced on the Atari 2600 console when it appeared, in 1977. Not content with playing games, they soon began programming them. At fourteen, Mateas wrote an adventure game. Stern, whose brother kept a pet rabbit named Bonny, made a game called *Bonny Attack*, in which the player flew the rabbit around and dropped turds and urine on jumping cats. In a high-school essay, Mateas announced his intention to become a big-time designer building games on a "new kind of digital logic circuit based on three-valued logic." Stern, meanwhile,

"Twenty years from now," the most prominent American game designer says, "video games will be as emotionally deep and meaningful to you as your dreams."

being intelligent and creative people, feel they have made much less of their powerful medium than it could be. They are vexed by a sense of underachievement. As Will Wright, the most famous and successful American game designer, told a crowded session at E³, "Interactive design is a really large box, and we've really only explored one little tiny corner of that box." David Cage, another prominent designer, told another audience, "What strikes me in this industry is, there's just a real lack of meaning in general."

Meaning is the catalyst that turns action to drama. Meaning requires words, not just sounds. It requires characters, not just figures. It requires dramatic shape: a sense that the action is leading to some transformation or resolution. It is what Stern and Mateas resolved they would bring to video games.

Michael Mateas is an assistant professor in the computer-science department of the University of California at Santa Cruz, where his duties include launching a new undergraduate-degree program in games. He wears two earrings and keeps his bushy brown hair tied back in a long ponytail. His body is small and his head is large, so from a distance one could almost mistake him for a boy. His pale green eyes are piercingly intense, though their intensity is leavened by his beaming smile. He thinks of himself as equal parts artist and computer scientist, and he manages to look both roles.

Stern, by contrast, is so average-looking that he is hard to describe: medium height, thinning brown hair, soft features, an introvert's undemonstrative manner. He could vanish

was getting interested in film and computer animation. Using a Handycam, he began making movies that blended live action with animation.

Then, in college, they both lost touch with video games. "I would still play them," Stern says, "but they started to feel a little juvenile. I was getting into filmmaking, stories with real characters, adult characters, about psychology and emotion, and games weren't addressing those things. Once you get into your late teens or early twenties, you realize there's a lot more out there in terms of art and literature and you lose interest in action-oriented entertainment."

Mateas decided he would be a scientist, pursuing his longtime dream of artificial intelligence, and he went for his doctorate. Stern was rejected by film schools and wound up taking a job at a game studio. His work on the *Petz* games kindled his interest in artificial intelligence, the essential ingredient of believable characters, whether animal or human. Mateas's work on artificial intelligence, meanwhile, had rekindled his interest in games. The AI dream was about building believable virtual people, and games seemed the ideal stage to test them on.

By the time their paths crossed, their thinking had already converged. They soon began plotting their anti-game. Instead of making a game about action figures in elaborate but childish game-worlds, they would make a story about adult characters and adult relationships. Instead of firing bullets at the characters, the player would fire words. The player would *talk* to the characters—in ordinary English, input with a keyboard rather than a joystick. And the characters would talk back, to

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each other and to the player. This meant—and they gulped to think of it—that their game would need to speak and understand natural language. That, in itself, is one of the great challenges in AI. But they didn't intend to stop there.

Conventional games create vast, immersive physical environments. The new game would all take place in a single indoor space, like a black-box theater stage. Instead of taking fifty hours to play, their game would take twenty minutes. Instead of advancing through levels without telling a story, the game would provide a compact, complete dramatic experience, like a one-act play. "We envisioned something where you could come home from work and play it from beginning to end, just like you come home from work and watch a half-hour television show," said Mateas. "You could come home and have a half-hour interactive-drama experience. It's complete in itself, it takes you on an arc. It entertains. But then the next day, you could come home from work and play it again and make something different happen." Instead of offering the player menus of quests or options, their game would seem to flow as naturally as life.

When Mateas, still a graduate student, told his adviser what they intended, the adviser replied that such a game would take a team of ten people ten years to build. The technology didn't exist. Commercial game design often employs teams of dozens, and here were two guys, one a grad student and the other self-employed (Stern eventually quit his job to work on the game full-time), expecting to build a whole new kind of game with their own four hands and no budget to speak of.

Before they could build the game, they had to build a programming language in which to write it. They spent more than two years constructing what they called ABL (for "A Behavior Language"), which encodes and controls virtual actors. "The actors' minds are written in ABL," Mateas explains. ABL itself has a sort of mind: enough artificial intelligence to decide how a particular character might, for example, simultaneously mix a drink, walk across the room, and yell at her husband, as a human actor could do.

That done, they built, again from scratch, another piece of AI, which they call a drama manager. It is a sort of artificial dramaturge and director, which looks at what the player and characters are doing and makes plot and dialogue choices intended to ratchet up and then release dramatic tension. Then they built a natural-language engine, which "listens" to what the player types in, looking for emotional and dramatic cues that the in-game characters can react to.

The game, by now, packed massive amounts of experimental technology under its hood, but what would it be about? They needed to create an intense drama in a confined space and with only a few characters. Influenced by Edward Albee's play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and also by several movies (Steven Soderbergh's *sex, lies, and videotape*, Woody Allen's *Husbands and Wives*, and Ingmar Bergman's *Scenes From a Marriage*), they decided to drop the player into a marital crisis. They hired actors to record five hours of dialogue, raw material from which the drama manager would build twenty minutes of game play.

In the end, they accomplished, they reckon, about 30 percent of what they had hoped to do. "We shot for the stars in hopes of getting to the moon," says Stern, "and we made it into orbit." In July 2005, standing together over Stern's computer in Portland, they pressed the button that "shipped," over the Internet, a new game called *Façade*.

When I set out to report this article, I thought I would bone up on video games and present myself as a suave expert. After all, I used to play a lot of Tetris. My aspirations to coolness lasted about three minutes, which was how long it took to load Electronic Arts' NBA Live 06. Jake Snyder, a twentysomething employee of the Entertainment Software Association, handed me the controls of a Microsoft Xbox 360 game console while two startlingly realistic basketball teams took shape before my eyes. As I stabbed at the unfamiliar buttons, I could barely control the ball. Flailing, I became aware that the game's color commentators were talking about ... *me*. No, correction: they were *mocking* me. "Nice easy attempt, but they just can't make a shot," they said. "Totally disorganized," they sneered. I realized, face burning, that I had just lost the respect of a software product.

Determined to endure any further humiliations in private, I bought a copy of a critically acclaimed single-player game called *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*, a big hit from Bethesda Softworks and a new threshold of accomplishment in its genre. It came with a fifty-page manual full of instructions like this: "DISPEL: Removes Magicka-based spell effects from the target. Does not affect abilities, diseases, curses, or constant magic item effects. The magnitude of the Dispel must exceed the spell's resistance to dispel (based on its casting cost) in order to dispel it." I despaired. This sounded about as fun as learning Microsoft Windows.

Entering the game, I was at first mystified and frustrated, but before long I was slaying goblins and pilfering valuables and casting spells and exploring caves. As the hours went by, I felt myself drawn in, then immersed, then reluctant to leave. I felt I was in the presence of a powerful medium, nothing like Tetris.

Oblivion's world is vast. A company spokesman told me I could explore for 500 hours before seeing everything. The game enfolded me in lush, cinematic landscapes. It populated the cities, changed the weather, cycled through day and night. Looking down I saw grass rendered in granular detail; looking up I saw skies swept with feathery clouds; all around me I found innumerable creatures and towns and terrains. The illusion was magical.

But then it would all collapse. Approaching one of the characters, I would click for dialogue. The character would give a little canned speech introducing itself. In response to another click, it would mouth several bits of prerecorded dialogue. State-of-the-art games render action and environment with eerie realism and genuine aesthetic distinction. But their characters are dolls, not people.

It took me no more than a couple of minutes to see that *Façade* would be different. Grace and Trip, a married couple and old friends of mine, invite me over. He's blond, she's



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brunette, they seem to be in their thirties. As I arrive, I hear them arguing behind the door. After I knock, I'm cordially admitted by Trip into a small, sparsely furnished apartment with a view of towering apartment blocks glowing against a night sky.

Typing "Hi, Grace, you look great," I begin chatting with the couple. They try to draw me into their simmering argument, nudging me to take sides. I can say anything I like; there are no rules. I can be sullen and unresponsive (that got me kicked out of their apartment), or I can talk nonsense, but in most of my visits I try to behave like an improv actor, picking up on their lines and shooting back cues of my own—agreeing with one, criticizing the other, flirting with either or both. No two plays are identical. In a typical game, however, Grace and Trip will argue with each other, one may flatter me while the other questions my friendship, and the tension between them will build until feelings are raw and the story reaches a revelation or a breaking point. Here I'm playing as Ed:

TRIP: Okay, you know what, Ed, I need to ask you something.

GRACE: Trip—

ED: What?

TRIP: Grace, let me ask our guest a question. Ed, yes or no—

ED: Let him ask, Grace.

TRIP: Each person in a marriage is supposed to try really hard to be *in sync* with the other, right?

GRACE: *What?*

TRIP: I mean, when you're married, to make it good, you need to always be positive, and agreeable, and *together*, right?

ED: [Hesitates.]

TRIP: Yes or no.

ED: No, not always.

GRACE: What?! Oh, all right. Yes. Just admit it, Trip, admit it, we have a shitty marriage! We've never been really happy, from day one! Never, goddammit!

Here the drama manager is raising the tension to prepare for a revelation; notice how it demands my participation. The game can end in reconciliation or a split or, sometimes, neither. This time, Grace reveals that she let Trip stop her from becoming an artist, and Trip realizes his mistake, and they reconcile. "Ed, thanks for coming over," Trip tells me, his voice now subdued. "You—I think you helped us." I exit; the game is over. Next time, something quite different will happen.

Façade won the grand jury prize at this year's Slamdance independent-game festival and has drawn wide notice from industry journalists and bloggers. If you want to play it, you can download it for free, at www.interactivestory.net. So far, more than 350,000 people have done so. Play and decide for yourself—but for me, playing Façade was both uncanny and frustrating.

Uncanny because Grace and Trip, despite being simply drawn, are at moments shockingly natural. "It was so subtle, was what impressed me," Will Wright, the prominent game designer, said when I asked him about Façade. "Most games beat you over the head with explosions and life-and-death situations and saving the world. And this is so subtle!" Trip, he marveled, can be slightly annoyed. "The fact that a character could be *slightly annoyed* in a game?"

Frustrating because, for all their innovative AI-driven mechanics, Grace and Trip remain too dumb to sustain the illusion of humanness. When I played as a woman (I could choose my sex) and announced I was pregnant with Trip's child, Grace and Trip thought I was flirting with them. They really only guess at a player's meaning, and they don't guess very well. "It *kind of* works," says Doug Church, a respected designer with Electronic Arts, the 800-pound gorilla of U.S. video-game publishers. "It has moments of awesomeness. It has moments of *Wow, if I could play that, I'd be so excited!* But then you try the next step and bam! You hit a wall and the wrong thing happens."

Yet when it does work, when the game flows and the player has figured out how to collaborate with Grace and Trip, there *are* those moments. After a successful performance (to call it a game seems wrong), I jotted this note: "I feel a strange desire to please these characters and, despite my better judgment, touched when Grace reveals she's scared of painting and they reconcile." Façade feels like the small-scale, no-budget, first-try research project that it is. But it was still capable of working on my emotions.

In January, at Slamdance, Mateas and Stern met some investors who were excited about interactive drama. Many phone conversations later, they had a deal to raise \$2 million for a commercial game. This was a crucial step for them. Stern, in particular, sees himself heading a commercial interactive-drama studio. Both he and Mateas believe that today's video games occupy only a fraction of the potential market for interactive-video entertainment.

"Most people—your sort of regular Joe or Jane on the street who loves television and movies—don't really get a whole lot out of games," Stern said, when I asked who would buy interactive dramas.

"I think there's a real market for more character-rich, story-centered interactive experiences," Mateas added. "I think potentially it's a market that dwarfs the entire current video-game market. There is a huge untapped market for experiences that are not about action adventures, quests, killing monsters, and solving puzzles."

They have given their next game the working title "The Party." It is still in the conceptual stage, but they expect that, where Façade had two computer-generated characters, The Party will have ten, a far more complicated proposition, but dramatically richer. It will require not just two programmers but, once it enters production, ten or more. The graphics will be more detailed and polished. The action will take place in a larger space. The game will last about forty minutes, rather than twenty. It will support more physical action, allowing the player to do things like rendezvous with characters in a private room, lock doors, carry things around, and fire a weapon. It will, they expect, understand the player better than Façade does, and support many more player moves.

And its aesthetic will be different. If Façade is a psychological drama, The Party will be a darkly comic social melodrama, along the lines of *Desperate Housewives*. In the prototype scripts, you find yourself cohosting a dinner party with your wife

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(or husband, if you play as a woman), who begs you to keep the conversation and liquor flowing smoothly. As guests arrive, the party fills with characters who have various designs on you and on each other. Your ex-girlfriend may try to break up your marriage; her angry husband may deck you; your neighbor may be snooping and your boss fishing for excuses to fire you. You can try to keep everyone happy, or you can hurl insults, or seduce your best friend's wife, or announce that you're gay, or refuse to admit guests (in which case your wife may let them in while shooting you angry looks), or lock your boss in the basement. You can try to mind your own business and be left alone. At every stage, however, the other characters—and behind them the drama manager—are conspiring to draw you in. Madcap complications ensue.

There will be sex in the game, and there will be violence. There will be a gun, but only one bullet, so no shoot-outs. Here again, the designers invert the conventions of Video-Game Land, where shooting people is easy but talking to them is hard: in *The Party*, violence will be rare and dramatically meaningful, ricocheting through the game, as in life, with unforeseen consequences. Sex, likewise, will be dramatic rather than pornographic. It may disrupt a marriage or get someone killed. The sex will not be X-rated, but it will be realistic. "You may not literally see it, but the characters will be moaning," Stern said.

Mateas and Stern expect work on *The Party* to take two and a half years, at least. They hope to make the game a paying franchise and use the proceeds to push on toward their real goal: a game that understands natural language and generates its own drama.

The Party, like *Faade*, will assemble bits of prerecorded dialogue and preauthored plot points; the drama manager, as if stringing beads, will sequence the bits as it monitors the action. In the end, the game can be no bigger than its supply of prefabricated dramatic possibilities. The door to a world of truly open-ended drama will unlock only when a computer learns to write its own dialogue and plot twists, using rules that teach it to emulate a human playwright or screenwriter.

I raised an eyebrow. Can it be done? A simple prototype, Mateas said, is "totally doable within twenty years."

"We have every intention of doing those projects," Stern added.

The mainstream video-game industry is interested in hits, not research. On the business side of the industry, none of the executives I talked to had heard of Mateas and Stern, and the executives tended to regard the interactive-drama project, when I described it, with polite skepticism, or—off the record—not-so-polite skepticism. "People love to blow shit up," one told me. He acknowledged exceptions, but said, "Blowing shit up is fundamental, because

verbs are what make video games work. These guys are not going to succeed." At E³, I mentioned the Mateas-Stern project to Mitch Lasky, who himself has defied industry skepticism by making a fortune on cell-phone games. (He is now with Electronic Arts.) By way of response, he took a long drag on an imaginary marijuana joint. Good luck, was his attitude—but he wouldn't invest.

In the smaller world of game designers, by contrast, Mateas and Stern are a known commodity and are regarded with something like respectful curiosity. Designers have seen too many artificial-intelligence failures to expect any kind of revolution, but at this point they would be happy if characters just got smarter. "A lot of people have worked on it," Doug Church, of Electronic Arts, told me. "Every year we're like, 'We're going to design incredibly intelligent, fluid humans who act realistically.' We try to take this huge step—and we fall all the way back down. At least," he said of Mateas and Stern, "they ended up somewhere new. It doesn't all work, but it is at least a step."

"It's a really hard problem, but it's one that we're incrementally going to solve," Will Wright mused, when I asked him about creating believable characters. "It's a very tall mountain we're climbing." Mateas and Stern, he added, don't have the answer, but they have found a path uphill.

At the moment, all industry eyes are on a project of Wright's, one that enjoys EA's multimillion-dollar backing. (EA owns Wright's studio, Maxis.) Wright is nearing completion of a game called *Spore*, expected some time next year. His last game, *The Sims*, was the biggest computer-game hit of all time and a major innovation in its own right. *Spore*, as a feat of creative imagination and technical prowess, outdoes *The Sims* handily. It has enjoyed extravagant media hype for a game that has yet to ship a single unit. All I can say, having test-driven it, is that the hype understates the case.

The evolution of a creature in Spore



Like *Faade* and *The Party*, *Spore* inverts traditional industry rules—but a different set of industry rules. Instead of outfitting the computer with a vast, prefabricated world for the player to explore, it leaves the designing of worlds to the players. But there is nothing, really, to "play": no need to win or compete. Instead, the player begins with a microbe, then helps it evolve into a creature of the player's own design. The creature spawns and becomes intelligent,

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It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate,
to have it make some difference that you
have lived and lived well."

- Ralph Waldo Emerson



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eventually forming tribes and populating the planet; the player can then zoom out to explore a universe of planets and creatures, all created by other users and downloaded into his game from a mighty central server at Electronic Arts. In *Spore*, as Carl Sagan might have said, there are millions and millions of planets, all the fanciful, scary, inspired, or insipid handiwork of thousands or millions of players.

At E³, after watching Will Wright demonstrate the game to a couple dozen people in a small room with black walls, I was shown into an even smaller black room, where I sat down in front of an ordinary PC and went to work designing my own creature. To my astonishment, within five minutes I was comfortably building a scaly, beaked alien, as lavishly detailed and three-dimensional as anything one might see in a Pixar movie. Once I had given it enough body parts to move, it began ... moving! It hopped. It walked. It made me giggle. *Spore's* most notable technical achievement is to teach the computer to animate whatever sort of creature anybody might design. Five legs? A buzz saw-tipped tail and eyes astride the neck? No problem; the software, as if channeling Chuck Jones, looks at what you build and brings it to life, complete with characteristic movement, expressions, and even babies of the species. With not much more effort, I next terraformed a planet, giving it candy-colored mountains and icy lakes. It was as if I had a whole animation studio in my right hand.

Spore looks nothing like *Faade* and *The Party*. It is mainstream and big budget instead of independent and cheap, free-form in structure and timescale (you could play forever) instead of tightly woven and compact, visual instead of verbal (there are no people or words in *Spore*). It is, however, in some respects another bite from the same apple: born partly of frustration with the crippling limitations of existing video games, all three products seek to create a new audience for video-game play by redefining the meaning of video-game "play": *play* not as competition within rules (as in "play Tetris"), but *play* as creative fun (*Spore* is, at heart, a fantastically powerful toy) or *play* as dramatic performance (*Faade* and *The Party* are, at heart, interactive theater). *Spore*, if it succeeds, will evoke in the player a feeling of magical delight. Interactive drama, if it succeeds, will evoke emotional catharsis.

But how many consumers of entertainment actually want catharsis, especially after a long day at work? What most consumers of entertainment want is fun. The story goes that Will Wright was once approached by a designer who pitched a game that featured an elaborate new enemy system. As Heather Chaplin and Aaron Ruby relate the incident in their history of video games, *Smartbomb*, Wright heard out the pitch and then deflated the guy with one devastating sentence. "Hm," he said, "that doesn't sound very fun."

Faade is ingenious, but it is not fun. It isn't really meant to be. *The Party* may turn out to be fun, even funny. But authoring fun is hard, and it is not obvious that interactive drama is a natural route to funness.

When the question of fun comes up, Mateas and Stern turn a little defensive. They are quick to say that games like

Tony Hawk's *Pro Skater*, *X-Men Legends*, and *Destroy All Humans!* will always be with us, which is fine by them. They just want to do more. Mateas said, "When you go and see an intense movie or a seriously intense play, you don't walk out and go, 'God, that was fun!' It was a valuable experience and something you wanted to do and got something out of, but what you got out of it wasn't 'fun.' It was thoughtful, reflective, made you think about your own life, made you think about the human condition, moved you. And I think interactive media can do exactly the same thing, and potentially more powerfully than noninteractive media."

I asked what sort of aesthetic experience they had in mind. "Making players feel a true connection to characters on the screen," Stern replied. "You'd feel like you're immersed in an actual relationship with these characters."

"Yeah," added Mateas. "Having the player actually care about the characters."

They may be wrong about the commercial market for whatever they wind up creating, but they must be right about the human appetite for characters. A game, even a great game, is finished once played, but a great character, once met, lives forever. Think of Sherlock Holmes and Mr. Spock, Don Quixote and Captain Ahab, Holden Caulfield and Humbert Humbert, Scrooge and Candalf, Charlie Brown and Severus Snape.

In your mind, then, take the animation intelligence of *Spore* and the dramatic intelligence of *Faade*, increase their sophistication by orders of magnitude, and extend both vectors until they intersect. Imagine a game that could conjure a Holmes or a Spock, or that could create, or empower the player to create, all manner of original characters, each character not only animated but personified: *acted*. Imagine a game that not only conjured the cobblestones of Victorian London or the red sky of Vulcan but that charged each city, each planet, with a quantum of dramatic potential. Imagine, at last, entering those dramas and encountering those characters. Games, if such they were, might be as short as a sitcom episode or as long as a soap-opera season; characters might be ones you created, bought, traded, or downloaded on a friend's recommendation; genres might span everything from comedy and fantasy to mystery and tragedy. You might not even need to choose: the software might watch how you play, learn your taste, and create dramas and characters and worlds to order. "Twenty years from now," Will Wright likes to say, "games will be as personal to you as your dreams, and as emotionally deep and meaningful to you as your dreams."

We can't know where the quest to build interactive drama might lead, but we do know that the dramatist's tools are the oldest and most potent of all emotional technologies. Sooner or later, drama will converge with the video game, the newest and most vibrant of all entertainment technologies. And then? Not long ago, I attended a stage performance of Aeschylus' *The Persians*, the most ancient work in the dramatic literature. Even in translation and at a remove of 2,500 years, it left an audience of modern Americans feeling stunned and disembodied, as if the intervening millennia had disappeared. *Wow*, I heard myself think, *if I could play that, I'd be so excited!* ▀

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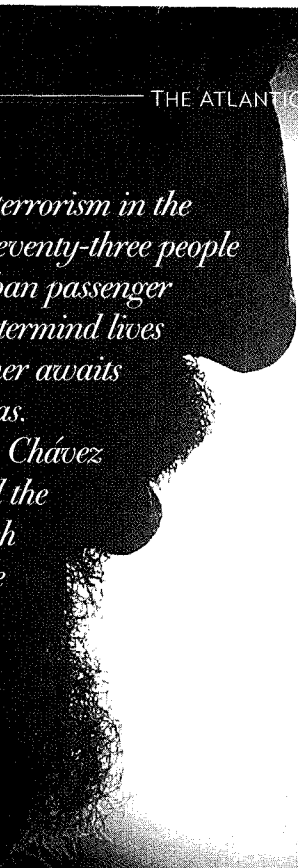
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It was the first act of airline terrorism in the Americas: thirty years ago, seventy-three people died in the bombing of a Cuban passenger plane. Now, one alleged mastermind lives freely in Miami, while another awaits trial on other charges in Texas. With Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez insisting the CIA was behind the bombing, why won't the Bush administration at last resolve enduring suspicions? A tale of thwarted dreams, frustrated justice, and murder in the sky

Twilight of the Assassins

BY ANN LOUISE BARDACH

On October 6, 1976, shortly after 11 a.m., two young Venezuelan men boarded a Cuban airliner in Port of Spain, the sleepy capital of Trinidad and Tobago. Though only twenty years old, Hernán Ricardo had been working on and off for five years for a Cuban exile based in Caracas named Luis Posada Carriles, doing all manner of odd jobs, including photography and surveillance. He had recently recruited his friend Freddy Lugo, twenty-seven, to assist him.

Ricardo was traveling on a Venezuelan passport in the name of José Vásquez García. Two other passports—a U.S. passport with a bogus name and his genuine Venezuelan passport—were in his shoulder bag. Lugo walked onto the plane carrying two cameras, one of which was stuffed with C-4 plastic explosive.

Twenty-four members of Cuba's national fencing team, many of them teenagers, also boarded Cubana Airlines Flight 455 in Port of Spain, wearing the gold and silver medals they had just won at a tournament in Venezuela. The plane was to stop briefly in Barbados and Jamaica before taking them home to Havana.

Some twenty minutes after takeoff, Ricardo pushed the rigged camera under his seat and walked to the rear rest-room, where he hid an explosives-packed toothpaste tube. He was nervous, sweating heavily, and somehow jammed the door, trapping himself inside. A stewardess tried to pry the door open. Unsuccessful, she recruited the plane's copilot, who kicked it loose, according to a passenger who disembarked with the two young men in Barbados.

Nine minutes after leaving Barbados, the pilot radioed distress. "We have an explosion on board," he told the control tower. "We're descending fast. We have a fire on board." He asked permission to return to the airport. Then came a second, deafening blast. "Hit the water, Felo! Hit the water!" the copilot cried, as the plane started plunging. "We have a total emergency!" the pilot shouted, and then the signal went dead. Sunbathers at Barbados's Paradise

Hotel watched in horror as the DC-8 dived into the sea.

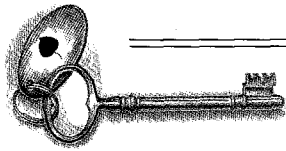
All seventy-three people on board were killed: fifty-seven Cubans, six exchange students and a young family from Guyana, and five North Koreans.

Ann Louise Bardach is the author of Cuba Confidential: Love and Vengeance in Miami and Havana and the editor of Cuba: A Traveler's Literary Companion. View the full text of Luis Posada's notes to the author at www.theatlantic.com.

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Ricardo hailed a taxi at the airport in Barbados, and he and Lugo took a meandering trip through Bridgetown, at one point asking the driver to pull over so they could watch a plane pass overhead. Around 1:15 p.m., they checked into the Bridgetown Holiday Inn, room 103, under false names. Ricardo immediately placed a call through the front desk and left a message with Luis Posada's secretary in Caracas. He then called his girlfriend, who worked at Posada's detective agency, and asked her to relay a message to her boss. "We're in a desperate situation and need help," he said. Then he added, using a predetermined code, "The bus was fully loaded with dogs." His next call was to a "Señor Paniagua," the nom de guerre of Orlando Bosch, the legendary anti-Castro militant, then living in Caracas. He didn't get through.

Ricardo was convinced a Cuban agent had seen him in the lobby; after a heated discussion, he and Lugo changed hotels. They took a walk by the sea to calm their nerves, but as word of the bombing buzzed among the locals, a panic-stricken Ricardo tossed a small package, which may have contained the detonator, into the sea and declared that they had to leave Barbados immediately.

On the short hop back to Trinidad, Ricardo alternated between euphoria and tears as he downed shots of whiskey. "*Seventy-three! More than the Jackal!*" he boasted, comparing himself to Carlos the Jackal, the Venezuelan terrorist then at the height of his fame. "Now I'm the one who has the record, because I'm the one who blew up that thing." Later he broke down, saying: "Damn it, Lugo, I'm desperate and feel like crying. I've never killed anyone before."

Back in Trinidad, they took a taxi to a Holiday Inn and checked in under assumed names. Ricardo continued to call Caracas and eventually reached Bosch. The taxi driver found the behavior of his high-strung passengers suspicious. So did the hotel's reception clerk. Both notified the police, who swooped in and arrested the two Venezuelans as suspects in the Cubana bombing.

Dennis Ramdwar, Trinidad's deputy police commissioner, quickly sized up the gravity of the situation and its political implications. Still, he told me recently, speaking with a faint Caribbean lilt, "I followed our normal procedures." Ramdwar zeroed in first on Ricardo, who was more talkative. The next day, he turned to Lugo. Both men denied any involvement in the crash.

In the immediate aftermath of the attack, a statement was released in Miami by CORU, an association of anti-Castro paramilitary groups, taking responsibility for the bombing. A follow-up statement claimed that the craft was a "military plane camouflaged as a civilian DC-8 aircraft," and dismissed the passengers as "57 Cuban Communists [and] five North Korean Communists."

Intense wire traffic shot back and forth between Washington and the American embassy in Caracas. The day after the bombing, the CIA made what its records termed "unsuccessful attempts" to reach Luis Posada, who had worked for the agency and remained an active informer. A memo stamped SECRET clearly indicates immediate concerns.

"Posada suspected of working with Orlando Bosch and others in plot," it reads. A flurry of internal memos followed, as Secretary of State Henry Kissinger demanded a clear account of America's relationship with these men and others suspected of involvement in the plot.

Four days after the attack, Ramdwar visited Ricardo in his cell and showed him plane tickets, a notebook, and a diary, found in his attaché. Ramdwar asked about several names and numbers in the notebook. One notation read, "Orlando Telephone No. 713916."

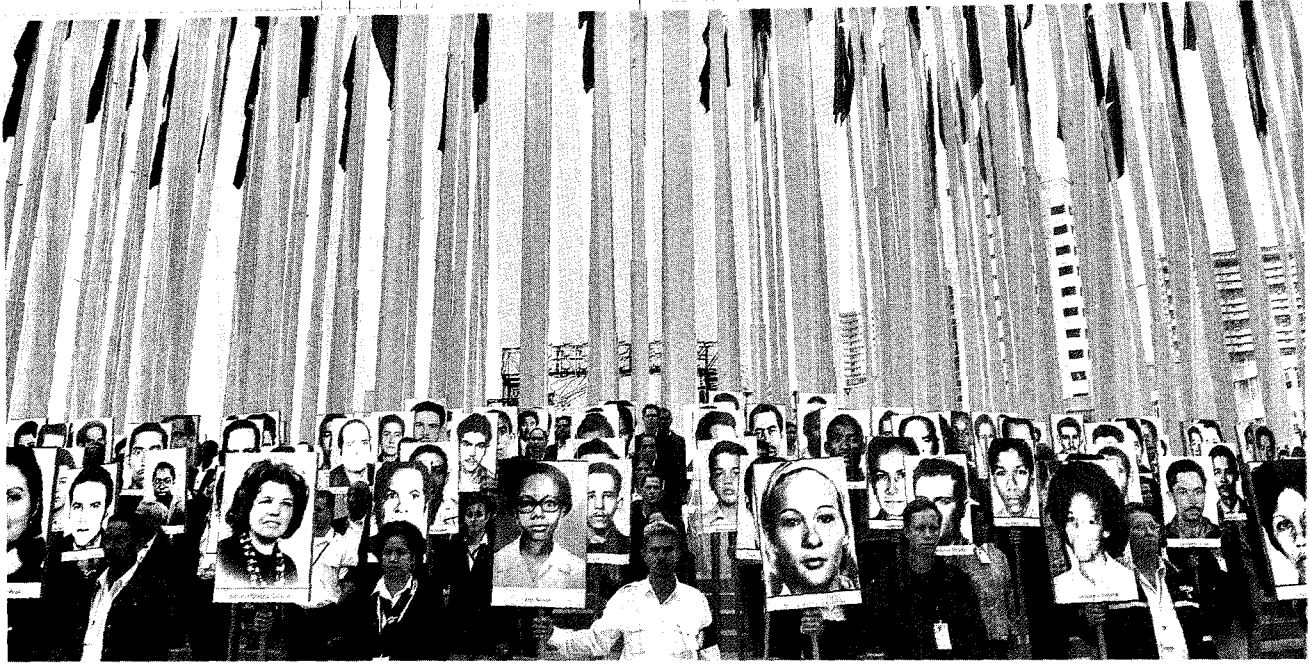
Ricardo later told Ramdwar that "Orlando" was Orlando Bosch, who headed an organization called "El CORU," which he also called "El Condor." He claimed that he himself was a member of the CIA (a charge he later recanted) and said he had been recruited "between 1970 and 1971" and trained in counterintelligence in Panama and Venezuela. Seeking to impress the police commissioner, he pointed out that his boss, Luis Posada, had been a powerful person in Venezuelan intelligence. Ricardo said he himself had been paid \$25,000 for his services.

On October 13, Posada and Bosch were arrested in Caracas. A search of Posada's detective agency turned up surveillance equipment, weapons, and a schedule of Cubana flights. A week later, Ricardo signed a confession. Then he returned to his cell and slit his left wrist. The wound was not deep, and he recovered quickly.

Nine days after the bombing, a million Cubans massed in Havana's Plaza de la Revolución. Fidel Castro was brimming with fury. "We can say that the pain is not divided among us," he thundered. "It is multiplied." He accused the CIA of complicity. "At the beginning, we had doubts as to whether the CIA had directly organized the sabotage or had carefully elaborated it through its cover organizations made up of Cuban counterrevolutionaries," he told the crowd. "We are now decidedly inclined toward the first. The CIA participated directly in the destruction of the Cubana Airlines plane in Barbados."

Thirty years later, after six months of investigation, reviewing recently declassified documents and speaking to sources in Caracas, Washington, Miami, and Trinidad, I have found no evidence of direct U.S. involvement in the Cubana bombing. And yet to this day, the United States refuses to declassify hundreds of pages of documents pertaining to the attack. This refusal fuels conspiracy theories and leaves unanswered questions about an act that has come to stand as an iconic symbol of America's insidious meddling in Latin America. Why was no effort made, despite warnings by CIA and FBI informers, to alert Cuba to the plot to take down a Cuban plane? What *was* America's relation to the plotters? And why did the Reagan and Bush administrations hire Posada and grant Bosch U.S. residency, when the CIA believed they'd had a hand in blowing up the plane?

Every year since 1976, Castro has marked the October 6 anniversary of the Cubana bombing with a fiery speech. On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the tragedy, four weeks after the 9/11 attacks, Castro noted that Cuba had been



Outside the U.S. mission in Havana in February, protesters memorialize those who died in the Cubana bombing and the Bay of Pigs.

a victim of airline terrorism long before the United States. "On a day like today, we have the right to ask, What will be done about Posada Carriles and Orlando Bosch," he railed, "the perpetrators of that monstrous, terrorist act?" Castro is fading from the scene, but he has passed the torch to his disciple, Venezuela's President Hugo Chávez, who has vowed to bring Posada to justice, even if it means taking on the United States.

UNREPENTANT WARRIORS

Standing at the front door of his home this past April, Orlando Bosch offered me his hand and smiled weakly. On August 18, Bosch would turn eighty, following in the footsteps of his former college classmate. "Fidel is only five days older than me," he said glumly, holding up the fingers of his right hand. Bosch's body is failing him. His lower lip appears bruised and droopy, the consequence of a series of strokes in the last year.

Bosch lives in a tract house in a lower-middle-class suburb on the western outskirts of Miami. His paintings line nearly every wall, most simple pastorals of Las Villas, the verdant province in Cuba where he was born. Many were done behind bars. "Nineteen years in prison, all told," he says, speaking slowly, "here and there," meaning Caracas, Atlanta, and Miami, for the most part.

Once upon a time, Bosch says, he spoke pretty good English, but those days are gone. He is foggy about some details of his life. In 1953, he did a medical internship in Toledo, Ohio, and the following year he completed his residency "in the hospital where Martin Luther King died, but I can't remember the name." That was a long time ago—before he gave up pediatrics for "terrorism," as the FBI has described his forty-five years as a paramilitary commando.

Bosch has another view of his career. "*Soy luchador y patriota*," he says. "I am a fighter and a patriot." Asked about the young fencers who died on the Cubana plane, he says, impatiently, "We were at war with Castro, and in war,

everything is valid." Soon after our first meeting, Bosch was asked about the bombing on a Miami television program. "The war we wage against the tyrant, you have to down planes, you have to sink ships. You have to be prepared to attack anything that is within reach," he told the host. "Who was on board that plane? Members of the Communist Party, *chico*! Our enemies."

At our next meeting, I asked Bosch if he was responsible for the Cubana bombing. "I have to tell you no," he said. "If I tell you I did it, I'm incriminating myself. If I tell you I didn't ... you won't believe me."

Two thousand miles away, Bosch's former comrade in arms, Luis Posada Carriles, paces in a small cell at an immigration facility in El Paso, Texas, waiting for the Justice Department to decide whether to release, deport, or prosecute him. Posada was arrested and charged with illegal entry in May 2005. He had slipped into the United States six weeks earlier and was visiting supporters and family in Miami. He had even filed an application for political asylum, but then he held a press conference, embarrassing authorities sufficiently to provoke his arrest. Last year, the Justice Department issued an "order of removal," but it has yet to find an acceptable country willing to take him.

Posada and Bosch, co-conspirators for almost fifty years, are a study in opposites: where Bosch has goaded law-enforcement agents with his raw fervor and guileless boasts, Posada is more subtle, a man of multiple agendas and multiple employers. At seventy-eight, he has speckled white hair, but he is sturdier than Bosch, notwithstanding an assassination attempt in 1990 that shattered his jaw and nearly severed his tongue, leaving him with a crushed, gravelly voice. (Posada insists his assailants were Cuban agents, though he acknowledges he has many enemies.)

I first met Posada in June 1998, when I was writing an investigative series on exile militants for *The New York Times*. He left a message on my answering machine, suggesting we

meet. I flew on his instruction to Aruba, where he picked me up at the airport wearing Bermuda shorts and sandals. He carried my bags outside to a waiting van, and off we went to his gated safe house, the home of a supporter, hidden from view by a high stucco wall. Posada explained that he had granted the unprecedented interview because he needed publicity for a bombing campaign he had launched in 1997 against Cuba's tourist industry, which killed one Italian tourist. (The attacks, he told me, were designed to damage property, not people.) Otherwise, investors and tourists would continue flocking to Cuba, handing Castro an economic lifeline. "It's a war," Posada said. "A bad war."

On my last day in Aruba, Posada handed me three pages of notes. "Ideology," he had written at the top in Spanish:

The absence of freedom of expression, of freedom of movement for a hungry people oppressed and terrorized by communist repression ... This gives all free Cubans a right to take up arms against the tyrant, using violence or whatever means at our disposal to derail this terrible system and bring freedom to our country.

At the bottom he had written, in English: "He does not admit the bombs in the hotels but he does not deny either."

In the end, the attention Posada garnered from the *Times* series was more than he had bargained for. His boasts of masterminding the bombings compromised his supporters in South Florida and New Jersey, some of whom he named as providing him with money. If the attorney general decides to try Posada for acts of terrorism, Exhibit A will be Posada's own admissions. Two grand juries, one in El Paso and another in Union City, New Jersey, empaneled intermittently to investigate Posada's activities, have subpoenaed several exile militants and detained one who refused to testify. What's clear from the meandering investigation, however, is that the Bush Justice Department has been reluctant so far to prosecute this case.

OPERATIONS IN MIAMI

In the 1940s Posada and Bosch were schoolmates of Castro's at the University of Havana. "I knew him very well," Bosch recalled, sitting in a rocking chair, next to a photograph from his university years. "We lived across the street from each other. He was intelligent, it's true. He studied law, and I studied medicine. I was the president of the medical school, and Fidel was a delegate for the law school. He could never win an election. I was also secretary-general of FEU [the student union], and he wanted to be president of that as well, but he could never win."

Bosch strongly opposed the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, and after university he commanded rebel forces in the province of Las Villas. When Castro declared victory in early 1959, he rewarded Bosch with the governorship of the province. But it wasn't long before Bosch accused Castro of betraying the revolution, abandoned his post, and led a deadly and effective guerrilla insurgency against Castro's new government. In July 1960, he fled to Miami.

Posada says he too remembers the intense law student from Birán, whom he describes as handsome but with a weak chin, adding that the beard improved his looks. Unlike Bosch, Posada was not politically engaged during his student years. His family ran a small publishing house in Cienfuegos, on Cuba's southern coast. In the mid-1950s, he secured a job with the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company and commuted between its headquarters in Akron, Ohio, and Havana. Posada says it was in the first months of Castro's reign, when revenge and retribution ran riot, that he became politicized.

At some point, Posada made the acquaintance of David Atlee Phillips, the CIA's man in Havana, who was busy recruiting operatives to overthrow Castro. He would also undoubtedly have rubbed shoulders with Phillips's colleague E. Howard Hunt, if not in Havana, then in Miami, where the CIA set up a secret substation to run covert operations in Cuba called JMWave.

Headquartered in a nondescript office building on a secluded, woodsy 1,500-acre tract on the University of Miami's southern campus (once a Navy blimp base), JMWave would become one of the biggest employers in South Florida. Some 400 full-time CIA staffers, with a \$50 million annual budget, would over time employ an estimated 15,000 Cuban exiles. According to Ted Shackley, the spymaster who oversaw the station, 300 to 400 "front" corporations hired thousands more. JMWave boasted its own armory of cutting-edge weaponry, a fleet of airplanes, and hundreds of boats. (One distinguished alumnus of Miami operations was Porter Goss, who was appointed CIA chief in 2004.)

By 1959, Posada was carrying out operations in Cuba, for which, he told me, the CIA provided him with "time-bomb pencils, fuses, detonator cords, and everything necessary for acts of sabotage." He would slip into Miami and return to Cuba with "war materials." In January 1961, his luck in Havana finally ran out, when a sabotage operation went awry. He arrived in Miami in time to sign up for the disastrous Bay of Pigs operation. Its failure, after President Kennedy refused to authorize air cover, deeply embittered Cuban exiles. Kennedy's subsequent deal with the Russians to end the Cuban missile crisis—with a promise not to invade Cuba—further angered anti-Castro exiles and many veterans of JMWave.

Posada was one of 212 exiles chosen by the CIA to attend officer-training school at Fort Benning, Georgia, after the Bay of Pigs. He graduated as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army in August 1963. At Fort Benning, he formed two crucial relationships: with Jorge Mas Canosa, who would become the exiles' most powerful lobbyist as chairman of the Cuban American National Foundation; and with Félix Rodríguez, later notorious for his roles in the death of Che Guevara and the Iran-Contra affair.

Posada was a charmer, fluent in English, a dashing ladies' man who could knock back half a bottle of Johnnie Walker Black Label and not make a fool of himself. He was a world-class marksman, an expert at demolition, and a master of black propaganda. He delighted in confecting noms de guerre for himself: Comisario Basilio, Bambi, and Solo (after the spy

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Luis Posada in 1985, shortly after escaping from a Venezuelan jail

in the TV series *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*). In time, he would have dozens of bogus passports from a host of countries, including the United States. Unlike Bosch, Posada was not garrulous; his only ideology was anti-communism. "There are no good communists," he told me. "All are bad." In short, he was the perfect Cold War spook.

In 1968, JMWave was decommissioned. "It made sense to have a base in Miami," CIA counterintelligence chief James Angleton would later confide to the author Dick Russell. "It was a novel idea. But it got out of hand; it became a power unto itself." The CIA had spawned a monster, a semi-rogue agency with some staffers openly contemptuous of the White House and Congress. The agency would have its first experience with a phenomenon called *blowback*. It had trained an army of saboteurs and assassins, then changed its mind. But for the Cuban exiles, and some of the station's officers, the war against Castro would continue.

THE CASABLANCA OF THE CARIBBEAN

Posada writes in his memoir that in the late 1960s, while having his usual pre-lunch daiquiri at Centro Vasco, a popular Miami restaurant, he was approached by "an elegantly dressed man" and offered a lucrative position in Venezuelan intelligence. With a recommendation from the CIA, he was made Venezuela's chief of security and, in 1971, chief of operations at DISIP, Venezuela's counterintelligence agency. Caracas had become a front line in the war against communism, with Venezuelan intelligence functioning almost as a satellite station of Langley. In an earlier variant of "rendition," some of the CIA's dirtier chores were farmed out to DISIP. Roiling with guerrilla groups, wildcatters, spies, and drug lords, Caracas was the Casablanca of the Caribbean—and, as such, the perfect home for Luis Posada.

Posada's move from Miami to Caracas suited the CIA. In 1972, four Bay of Pigs veterans were indicted along with Howard Hunt for trying to burglarize the Democratic Party's headquarters at the Watergate. The CIA awkwardly sought to distance itself from the burglars, and from other former employees. Caracas was a hospitable refuge: the CIA station chief from July 1972 to May 1973 was none other than David Atlee Phillips, who would later tell congressional investigators that Posada had worked with him on Track II, an operation to "thwart by whatever means" the inauguration of President Salvador Allende in Chile.

Throughout the 1960s, much of the '70s, and again in the mid-'80s during Iran-Contra, Posada was a paid asset of the CIA, a detail his defense attorneys hammer home at

every opportunity. But his relationship with the agency was not entirely smooth. CIA memos published by the National Security Archive questioned his coziness with drug dealers and mobsters and a "tendency" to become involved with "gangster elements" and in "clandestine sabotage activities." A 1973 memo reported that "Posada may be involved in smuggling cocaine from Colombia through Venezuela to Miami, also in counterfeit US money in Venezuela." Another noted that Posada was "seen with known big time drug trafficker," and a third referred to him as a "serious potential liability." The CIA severed formal relations with Posada in February 1976, but even after that he continued as a paid informer, according to former agency officers.

With or without the CIA, Posada would always have a paycheck, even when pursuing his personal passion of eliminating Castro. ("I'm the only one who didn't make money," Bosch told me with dismay.) In his closest miss, Posada partnered with Antonio Veciana, a former banker who founded the paramilitary group Alpha 66 with the backing of the CIA. The plan, conceived by Veciana's CIA handler, was to take out Castro at a summit in Santiago, Chile, in November 1971. Veciana hired two hit men, both cohorts of Orlando Bosch, to pose as news reporters, equipped with a 16 mm camera that doubled as a machine gun.

According to Veciana, the assassins fixed the lethal camera on Castro but got cold feet after spotting Cuban security agents guarding the exits. Posada was furious. The men regrouped to plot another attempt, in Ecuador. This time, Posada was taking no chances: he would fire the weapon himself, using a state-of-the-art sniper rifle with a silencer. Knowing Castro would fly into Quito's airport, Posada positioned himself in an elevated alcove several hundred feet away. But at the last moment, the wily Castro changed his arrival to a military base. Posada dispatched another set of assassins with the killer camera to Caracas, but when Castro appeared, Posada's men were nowhere to be found.

From his perch in Venezuelan intelligence, Posada ran a campaign to hunt Castro-backed leftist guerrillas. "I persecuted them very hard," he told me. "Many, many people got killed." He saw to it that all Cuban offices and businesses in Venezuela were under continuous surveillance and also poked into the private business of some of Venezuela's politicians—including Carlos Andrés Pérez, who didn't appreciate having Posada listen to secret wiretaps of his conversations with his mistress. When Pérez was elected president in 1974, he promptly fired his operations chief. Posada quickly rebounded, recycling his high-powered contacts into an even more profitable venture: a security and detective agency.

PEDIATRICIAN, PATRIOT, MILITANT

Orlando Bosch arrived in Miami in July 1960 with his wife and four young children, and soon found work as a pediatrician. While his day job was saving babies, his free time was devoted to eliminating his political enemies. The CIA financed a training camp for him not far from the Everglades, but Bosch didn't have the temperament to work with the agency. Once he realized there would be no second

Bay of Pigs, he wrote President Kennedy a rambling screed, shut down his camp, and went out on his own. Bosch's new group, Cuban Power, took responsibility for dozens of bombings and assassination attempts, which Bosch referred to as "justice actions." By the mid-'60s, Bosch had been arrested half a dozen times in Miami for various bombings and attacks. In September 1968, he was arrested again, for firing a 57 mm bazooka into a Polish ship docked at the Port of Miami. This time, he was sentenced to ten years in federal prison.

Some of Bosch's collaborators questioned his tactics. Friends in Miami often whispered that he was "mad" or "crazy," sometimes affectionately, but also fearfully. Bosch had developed a cultlike following, and attracted powerful supporters. The governor of Florida, Claude Kirk, was among those who lobbied for his early parole, and in 1972 Bosch walked out of prison. Two years later, he violated his parole and left the country "to make sabotage against Castro," as he put it, with Posada in Venezuela. One casualty of his crusade was his marriage.

On October 10, 1974, Cuba's Independence Day, Bosch set off bombs at Panama's embassy and at a cultural center in Caracas shortly before Cuban officials were due to arrive. True to form, he boasted about his handiwork, necessitating his arrest. Venezuela offered to extradite him to the United States and was surprised to learn that the Justice Department did not want him back. Bosch was soon released, and he headed south to Chile, where he found an accommodating host in General Augusto Pinochet. In Santiago, he fell in love with a beautiful *chilena*, Adriana Delgado, twenty years his junior. The two married in February 1975 and had a daughter soon after.

George H. W. Bush became director of the CIA in January 1976 and served through January 1977. Bush succeeded William Colby, whose cooperation with the Church Committee hearings, and testimony about the CIA's role in destabilizing Chile, had infuriated many in the agency. Colby had implemented major reforms, including a prohibition on political assassinations, and was the first director to give major public briefings to Congress on agency operations. These actions deeply alienated some of the CIA's more committed Cold Warriors, many of whom backed the appointment of Bush.

When Bush took up his post, he offered Ted Shackley, the former head of JMWave, the CIA's third most powerful job: associate deputy director. Bush appears to have had contacts with Cuban exiles as far back as the 1960s, when, according to a declassified memo by J. Edgar Hoover, the FBI briefed him on their response to the assassination of John F. Kennedy. A Bush spokesman has previously said that the memo referred to a different George Bush, and Bush did not respond to my requests for comment.

Shackley was a divisive figure, and relations between Henry Kissinger's State Department and George Bush's CIA were painfully strained—so much so, according to William Rogers, the assistant secretary of state for Latin America, that the State Department rarely relied on CIA intelligence.

"The agency was controlled by hard-liners," he said. "They had an agenda, and the intelligence was lousy." Shackley later played a role in the Iran-Contra affair.

Bush's tenure at the CIA coincided with the worst spate of bombings and assassinations by Cuban exile militants in Latin America and in the United States. At that time, bombs went off regularly in Miami;

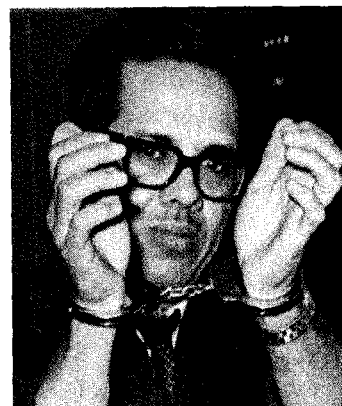
sometimes there were several explosions in one day. In December 1975, thirteen bombs went off in forty-eight hours, striking at the very heart of the city: the airport, the police department, the state attorney's office, the Social Security building, the post office, and the FBI's main office. Miraculously, no one was seriously wounded: the goal was not to kill civilians, but to warn Kissinger and Rogers not to pursue détente with Cuba.

Before the blasts, the target or the news media would often get a phone call. The caller would play the first haunting strains of Simon and Garfunkel's 1970 hit, "If I Could"—also called "El Cóndor Pasa," after a Peruvian folk song: "I'd rather be a hammer than a nail. Yes I would, if I could..." It was not lost on investigators that Condor was also the code name of the "Dirty War" against leftist opponents being conducted by the military regimes of Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay, who sometimes employed Cuban militants to do their bidding.

THE BOMBING, AND AFTER

Bosch was a fugitive from U.S. justice when he founded the Coordination of United Revolutionary Organizations, an act that established him as the godfather of the Cuban exiles. At CORU's initial meeting, on June 11, 1976, at a mountaintop retreat in the Dominican Republic, twenty exiles, including Bosch and Posada, devised a master plan to bring down Castro and intimidate his allies. "Our war strategy was created there—everything," Bosch told me. "All the top leaders of the paramilitaries in Miami were there." Subsequently, CORU took responsibility for scores of bombings, kidnappings, and murders in Latin America and the United States. One of its highest priorities, according to an FBI informer, was to bring down a Cuban airliner. The group reasoned that such an audacious act would demonstrate its might, terrify the Cuban government, and focus the world's attention on its cause.

"Several informers infiltrated, of course," Bosch's wife, Adriana, told me with a roll of her eyes. "It never fails." One informer warned the CIA that militants led by Bosch had "plans to place a bomb on a Cubana airline flight traveling between Panama and Havana," specifically naming Cubana Airlines Flight 476 on June 21. The resulting CIA memo, titled "Possible Plans of Cuban Exile Extremists



Orlando Bosch in FBI custody in 1965

to Blow up a Cubana Airliner," described its source as a "businessman with close ties to the Cuban exile community" and a "usually reliable reporter."

On September 8, 1976, Bosch returned to Venezuela at the invitation of Orlando García, President Carlos Andrés Pérez's chief of security. This time, a pact was agreed upon: Bosch was told that he could base himself in Venezuela so long as his targets remained outside its borders. In return, he was given a Venezuelan passport, a DISIP identity card in the name of Carlos Sucre, and a suite at the chic Anaucó Hilton, where García and his deputy, Ricardo "El Mono" Morales, also had apartments. Morales, a Cuban exile like his boss, was a frequent informer for the FBI, the DEA, the CIA, and assorted Latin American intelligence agencies; he even testified against Bosch in the Polish ship case of 1968.

Not long after Bosch's arrival in Caracas, a fund-raising dinner was held in his honor at the home of a wealthy Cuban doctor. Posada, Mono Morales, and Orlando García were among the attendees. During dinner, according to a CIA memo sent after the Cubana bombing, Bosch sought to extort "a substantial cash contribution to his organization" from the Venezuelan government in exchange for a promise to abstain from attacks in the United States during President Pérez's upcoming trip to the United Nations. He received \$500.

It appears this was not sufficient. On September 21, Orlando Letelier, Chile's former ambassador to the United States and an outspoken critic of General Pinochet's military regime, was assassinated with his American assistant in Washington when a bomb placed under his car blew up just as he was approaching his office on Massachusetts Avenue. The FBI immediately suspected—correctly—that Cuban militants had killed Letelier with help from the Chilean secret police. "Pinochet's people were always telling us that they wanted Letelier killed," Bosch told me. A map of Letelier's route to work was later found in Posada's office.

The murders, six weeks before the presidential election, stunned Washington, from the White House to the CIA to the international diplomatic corps. Another CIA memo written after the Cubana bombing stated that its informer had overheard Bosch asserting, "Now that our organization has come out of the Letelier job looking good, we are going to try something else." Posada is quoted as saying, "We are going to hit a Cuban airliner" and "Orlando (Bosch) has the details." The memo concluded that specific plans for the Cubana bombing were solidified soon after.

The plan had been for Hernán Ricardo to stop in the United States after the Cubana bombing. To do this, he would need a visa. Joseph Leo, the FBI's legal attaché in Caracas, turned Ricardo away on his first application, telling him he had to have a letter of employment. On October 1, 1976, five days before the bombing, Ricardo returned to Leo's office with a letter signed by Luis Posada on business stationery, attesting that Ricardo was Posada's employee.

A few things about the smooth-talking Ricardo troubled Leo, whose name and number were found by investigators in Lugo's address book. In a seven-page memo to the FBI

sent two days after the bombing, Leo wrote that he had met Ricardo on several occasions; he described Ricardo as a photojournalist "in the personal service of Luis Posada" and explained that Ricardo had sought his help, asking if he had "some suggestions regarding courses of action that might be taken against the Cuban embassy in Caracas by an anti-Castro group." (Leo reported that he discouraged Ricardo, telling him he "abhorred terrorist activities.") When Ricardo returned to the embassy with Posada's letter on September 30, Leo studied his passport and noted that he had been in Trinidad on September 1, the very day the Guyanese consulate there had been bombed. Guyana's cordial relations with Cuba infuriated militant exiles, and Leo wrote in his memo that he wondered, "in view of Ricardo's association with Luis Posada, if his presence there during that period was coincidence."

Peter Kornbluh, of the National Security Archive, which published the declassified CIA and FBI memos concerning the Cubana bombing, has questioned why Leo never raised any alarms about Ricardo, despite his suspicions. (Leo has consistently refused to speak to the press.) The archive, says Kornbluh, has pressed the Bush administration to release hundreds of pages of known CIA and FBI memos and reports on Posada, Bosch, and the Cubana case. So far, the requests have been denied.

When Venezuelan police arrested Bosch and Posada on October 13, Posada was told he was being held at DISIP headquarters "for a few days" for his own protection. He and Bosch were allowed to order dinner from their favorite restaurants, along with the finest whiskeys. Bosch told me he was led into Morales's office two days after his arrest for a secret meeting with García and Morales. At the end of the meeting, Morales handed him an envelope full of cash, saying, "Here's some money for you to get out of the country." Bosch wanted to know what would happen to his comrade. "Posada is staying," he recalled being told. "There is no alternative." Morales urged him to leave: "Better you get out first, and later we'll see what we can do for Posada." Bosch told me he replied without hesitation: "Either we both leave, or I stay with him."

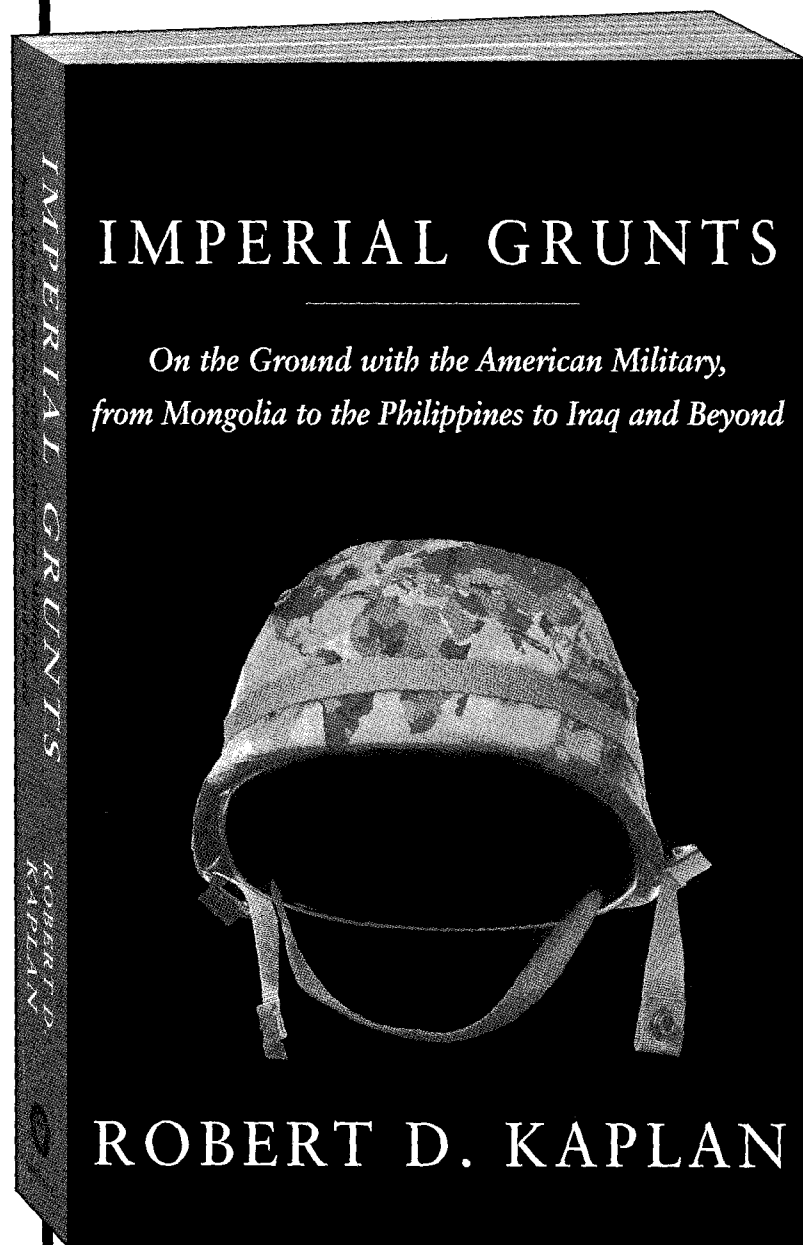
I asked Bosch why he did not leap at the offer of freedom. "Because he was my friend," he said, "and I could not go and leave him in prison." Then he added, cryptically, "And I was responsible for all of that."

VENEZUELAN JUSTICE

Several countries initiated investigations into the Cubana bombing, and a tussle ensued over who would try the case. In the end, jurisdiction was awarded to Venezuela, in part because Ricardo and Lugo were Venezuelan, but also because the putative masterminds—Posada and Bosch—had planned the attack in Caracas. A month after the bombing, Morales told the FBI that the plan was conceived at two meetings at the Anaucó Hilton in Caracas. According to a declassified FBI memo, Morales reported that "some people in the Venezuelan government are involved in this airplane bombing, and that if Posada Carriles talks, then [Morales] and others in the Venezuelan government

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will 'go down the tube.'" He warned his FBI handler, "We'll have our own Watergate."

Posada and Bosch were transferred to a Venezuelan prison, and held together with Ricardo and Lugo, who were deported to Caracas twenty days after their arrest. Their supporters responded with deadly fury. In the fourteen months following their arrest, CORU bombed Venezuelan airline ticket offices in San Juan and Miami and the Venezuelan consulate in San Juan. Bosch referred to the bombings as "messages." The Cubana case became a cause célèbre for Miami's political leaders, who lobbied Washington to press for their release. Miami's mayor, Maurice Ferré, visited Bosch in prison; the city commissioners declared an official "Orlando Bosch Day."

The case was fraught with peril for its prosecutors, witnesses, and judges, several of whom received death threats. "It would be inconceivable to allow them to go free," one judge told a Venezuelan reporter, "but we are being strongly pressured ... Whatever the government wants is what will get done." The Venezuelan government had two conflicting goals: to avoid a showdown with Cuban militants, and to demonstrate to the world—and to Castro—that it was serious about prosecuting the case.

Venezuela also had a third goal: to divert attention from the involvement of its own intelligence agency. Recently declassified State Department cables reveal that the United States asked Venezuela to extradite Bosch immediately after the attack. The Venezuelan government tried, instead, to smuggle him out of the country. It was far more expedient to focus attention on Posada, a former CIA agent, than on Bosch, who had so recently been welcomed into the country by the Venezuelan president's chief of security.

In 1982, Mono Morales turned state's evidence in a major narcotics investigation in Miami, an operation called Tick Tock. He had worn out his welcome in Caracas and had plans to settle in Miami, and was eager to ease relations with Cuban exile militant leaders, who no longer trusted him. In a confession videotaped by Posada's attorney in Miami, Morales took responsibility for the bombing and asserted that Bosch and Posada were innocent. He railed against the Venezuelan president and insisted that Ricardo and Lugo had been working for him at DISIP.

Not long after he confessed, Morales was shot dead in a Key Biscayne bar by a drug thug. "It was a hit," said D. C. Diaz, a Miami detective who knew both Morales and his assassin. Posada's attorney was murdered a year later.

George Kiszyński, a thirty-four-year veteran of the FBI who interviewed Posada, Morales, and García, described Morales as "decadent, devious, with an astonishing photographic memory." Bosch's verdict was more terse: "El Mono was a drunk and a lost soul."

"Mono was crazy," Posada told me. "He was not *immoral*, he was *amoral*." But in the case of his Cubana confession, Posada insists that Morales was telling the truth. Posada has expressed feeling for the victims of the Cubana bombings, and denies involvement in the attack. When I pressed and asked him who did it, he said, "I think it was Morales."

Bosch resigned himself to prison life, painting, writing, and plotting against Castro. Posada was less sanguine. In 1985, following two failed attempts, he escaped, after bribing the warden with \$50,000 raised by Jorge Mas Canosa, the chairman of the Cuban American National Foundation. He was ferried to El Salvador on a shrimp boat owned by a Miami-based Cuban exile, and met by Félix Rodríguez, his former comrade from Fort Benning and the Bay of Pigs. Rodríguez had a special offer: he invited Posada to be his deputy in a covert operation to help the Contras dislodge the Nicaraguan government. Posada was given a Salvadoran passport and driver's license in the name of Ramón Medina Rodríguez. Among his duties was coordinating the flights ferrying supplies from El Salvador to the battlefield in Nicaragua and setting up safe houses where American personnel kept their surveillance and encryption systems. Posada was delighted. Not only was he back in favor, he was back on the payroll.

Posada told me that when the Iran-Contra scandal burst onto the front pages in 1986, he earned every penny of his taxpayer-paid salary—by his account roughly \$10,000 a month. In a matter of hours, he cleaned out the U.S. safe houses in El Salvador, ferrying American personnel out of the country and disposing of paperwork that would have proved troublesome to many in Washington.

Meanwhile, with Posada safely out of the picture, the Venezuelan judiciary moved forward with the trials of his co-defendants in the Cubana bombing case. The court inexplicably barred the confessions of Lugo and Ricardo, along with the entire case file of the Trinidad and Barbados police investigators, ruling that the material was inadmissible because it was in English. Nevertheless, in July 1986, Ricardo and Lugo were convicted of treason and aggravated homicide. They were sentenced to twenty years each, the minimum allowed under the law. Bosch was acquitted—perhaps not surprisingly, since almost none of the evidence against him was allowed at his trial.

On February 16, 1988, a supremely confident Orlando Bosch flew to Miami, despite not having a U.S. visa. He was promptly detained for his prior parole violation, and for illegal entry. Jorge Mas Canosa instructed his powerful lawyers to represent Bosch, whose arrival was celebrated by hard-liners.

And yet not everyone was pleased to see Bosch return. "My colleagues and I in Miami conducted exhaustive investigations of Bosch," the FBI agent George Davis had written in a memo to Secretary of State George Shultz. "He was regarded by the FBI and other law enforcement agencies as Miami's number one terrorist." The attorney general's office recommended that he be immediately deported. "The October 6, 1976, Cuban airline bombing was a CORU operation under the direction of Bosch," Joe Whitley, the associate attorney general, wrote in his decision recommending Bosch's deportation. "CORU is the name of Bosch's terrorist outfit."

While the Justice Department reviewed the case, bomb threats were made against the Miami INS office, which classified Bosch as an "excludable alien."

Now electoral politics would come into play. In 1989, securing Bosch's release was one of the cornerstones of Ileana Ros-Lehtinen's congressional campaign in Miami. She praised Bosch as a hero and a patriot on exile radio stations and raised \$265,000 for his legal defense fund. Her campaign manager was a political neophyte, but one who had the ear of the White House. His name was Jeb Bush.

On August 17, 1989, Jeb Bush attended a meeting he had arranged for Ros-Lehtinen with his father to discuss the matter. The following July, President Bush rejected his own Justice Department's recommendation and authorized Bosch's release. Not long after that, Bosch announced that he was ready to "rejoin the struggle" and called the agreement he had signed forswearing violence "a farce." Two years later, the Bush administration granted Bosch U.S. residency.

Bosch's defiance has been an ongoing source of embarrassment for the Bush family. "They purchased the chain," Bosch is fond of saying, citing a Cuban adage, "but they don't have the monkey."

A CASE OF MISSING FBI FILES?

In the wake of Iran-Contra, Posada lay low, careful to avoid a subpoena to the Senate hearings on the scandal. He settled down in San Salvador with his longtime mistress and continued to devise schemes to eliminate Fidel Castro. In 1997, Posada began bombing tourist targets in Cuba. In June 1998, I showed him a fax he had sent a collaborator instructing him to collect funds from supporters in Union City, New Jersey. "If there is no publicity, the job is useless," he had written. "The American newspapers will publish nothing that has not been confirmed. I need all the data from the discotheque in order to try to confirm it. If there is no publicity, there is no payment." At the bottom of the fax was his distinctive handwriting and signature, "Solo." I had received a copy of the fax from an informer working in Posada's office, who had given the original to the FBI. When I showed Posada the fax, he fretted that it could cause him problems with the FBI. He need not have worried.

The FBI sent agents to Guatemala to interview the informer, who related precisely how Posada's operation worked and identified its intended targets. "We found him entirely credible," said an agent who worked on the case. "We thought it would be a slam dunk: we'd charge and arrest Posada."

"But then," he said, his voice trailing off, "we had a meeting one day and the chief said, 'Hey, wait a minute. Lots of folks around here think Posada is a freedom fighter.' We were in shock. And they closed down the whole Posada investigation. When we asked for a wiretap on Bosch, who we knew was working on bombing runs, we were turned down."

Soon after Posada's arrest for illegal entry in May 2005, I was subpoenaed along with *The New York Times* and asked to turn over materials relating to Posada. The *Times* lawyers successfully moved to quash the subpoena, but in July of this year, and then again in September, the Justice Department said it would seek another subpoena if we refused to cooperate with their investigation. An FBI agent phoned me and

asked if I would share my copies of FBI and CIA files. When I asked why, he said, "Do us a favor. We can't find ours."

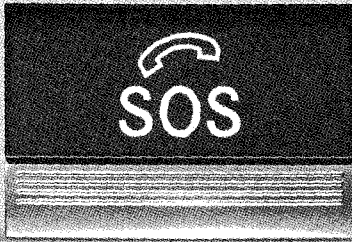
Evidently, he wasn't kidding. In 2005, agents learned that the evidence, including original Western Union cables and money transfers sent between Posada and his co-conspirators in Union City, had vanished from the evidence room in Miami. Without them, a criminal prosecution of the case is severely hobbled. "I don't know whether or not it was an accident," said one FBI investigator, who asked that his name not be used. "Who knows?"

An FBI spokeswoman, Judy Orihuela, said she could not confirm the fate of Posada's evidence files. "There is a destruction procedure when a case is closed, as our space in the evidence room is so limited. This would be more of a clerical action," she said. Then she conceded, "the supervisory agent in charge and someone from the U.S. Attorney's Office would have to sign off." She added that Posada's case has been reopened "and is now a pending case."

DOUBLE STANDARDS

Miami's Cuban exile leaders rejoiced in the election of George W. Bush in 2000. Almost immediately, they saw a sea change in U.S. policy toward Cuba. The Bush administration significantly strengthened Cuba's embargo and placed onerous new restrictions on family visits. In summer 2001, two Cuban exiles who had been jailed for their roles in the murder of Orlando Letelier were

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freed from detention and settled in Miami. Investigators in the FBI's Miami office say they were told by their superiors to shutter outstanding cases on exile plots and concentrate on finding Cuban spies.

Posada made his last attempt to eliminate Castro in 2000, at a summit in Panama. This time, he was outwitted by Cuban intelligence and captured with his co-conspirators. All four men were charged with attempted assassination and convicted of lesser charges. Miami's exile leadership led a spirited campaign to have them freed. South Florida's three Cuban American members of Congress—Lincoln Diaz-Balart, Mario Diaz-Balart, and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen—lobbied and wrote letters on official congressional stationery to Panama's president, Mireya Moscoso, seeking their release.

Then came September 11, 2001. President Bush famously told the world that the choices were stark. "We've got to say to people who are willing to harbor a terrorist or feed a terrorist: 'You're just as guilty as the terrorist,'" he intoned gravely. Nevertheless, weeks before the 2004 election, Posada and his cohorts received last-minute pardons from the outgoing Panamanian president, who maintains a home in Key Biscayne, Miami.

While his comrades flew directly to Miami, Posada went back underground. He was, after all, a fugitive from Venezuelan justice. But over time, he was given reasonable assurances that he too would be welcomed in Miami. His supporters pointed out that Bosch, who had been openly boastful about his operations against Castro, led a comfortable and public life in Miami. When Posada surfaced in Miami in the spring of 2005, the administration cringed. The double standard was no longer sustainable. Following his ill-considered press conference, Posada was arrested and hustled to El Paso.

Posada's arrest has infuriated hard-liners in Miami, who argue that the CIA bred and nurtured their militias. "Not only is Luis not a threat to national security," said David Sebastian, the paralegal who is preparing Posada's briefs, "he *was* national security. He was part of Operation Southern Front, which is what they called it before Iran-Contra, and he worked for the Hammer," he said, referring to Oliver North by his code name. "From 1967 to 1986, Luis was a compensated agent of the CIA. And George Bush, the vice president, knew what he was doing."

Posada's lawyers are blurring some important distinctions. Certainly, Posada was on the payroll through most of the 1960s and again during Iran-Contra, but CIA memos indicate that by the mid-'70s the agency used him only as an asset or informer. On February 13, 1976, the agency formally broke ties over what documents cryptically described as concerns about "outstanding tax matters."

In 1999, when Hugo Chávez swept into the Venezuelan presidency on a wave of populist nationalism, seven years after his failed coup against Pérez, he immediately forged a partnership with Castro. Their relationship was based on common interests, and common enemies. Last year, on his weekly radio and television program, *Aló Presidente*, Chávez played the audiotape of the desperate pilot of the Cubana

plane radioing for help, followed by an excerpt of Castro's famous speech. "If the United States does not extradite Luis Posada Carriles, we will be forced to reconsider our diplomatic ties," Chávez warned. (At other times, he has threatened to cut off oil shipments.) Then he offered his own conspiracy theory. At the time of the bombing, he intoned ominously, "George Bush, the father, was director of the CIA. That's the truth. So maybe now they fear that [Posada] will talk, and that's why they protect him."

Last fall, at Posada's immigration arraignment, Joaquín Chaffardet, Posada's partner in his detective agency and the former secretary-general of DISIP, testified that if the United States deported Posada to Venezuela, he would likely be tortured. The U.S. government offered no rebuttal, questions, or witnesses, so the judge ruled in Posada's favor and denied Venezuela's request for deportation. Chaffardet, who was Posada's attorney in Caracas, believes that Orlando García "manipulated" facts to pin the blame on Posada. He told me that although Posada would never say so publicly, he had always had misgivings about Bosch. "You know that Bosch is crazy, don't you?" he said, arching one eyebrow. "He's always been crazy. Luis never trusted Bosch, due to his schizophrenic personality. He said there was nothing he wouldn't do."

In September 1976, Posada took Chaffardet with him to see the chief of investigations for Venezuelan intelligence. In their hour-long meeting, Posada confided that Bosch was out of control, drinking heavily, and plotting attacks. Chaffardet says he has "no doubt" that Posada was the source of the June 1976 CIA memo titled "Possible Plans Warning the Agency of Bosch's Plans to Blow Up a Cubana Plane."

When I asked Posada recently about his feelings toward Bosch, he said only that he was "*un patriota*, who has given everything for the cause of liberty." But in several CIA memos, he warned that Bosch was capable of unimaginable violence. In February 1976, he alerted the CIA that Bosch and another exile were plotting to kill Salvador Allende's nephew in Venezuela. He also informed on a plot by Bosch to assassinate Henry Kissinger. "Posada informing agency that he must go through with attempt to contact Bosch as though he did not know that Bosch had been arrested," reads an internal memo. Bosch had been arrested for trying to kill Allende's nephew. "Posada concerned that Bosch will blame Posada for leak of plans."

I am an optimist," Posada wrote me the day after his immigration arraignment, last September. "I continue to be and always will be. I believe in God." Posada is kept segregated from the general inmate population in El Paso. When he leaves his cell, he wears a bulky bulletproof vest. Although he has few visitors, he is often on the phone with his long-suffering wife, Nieves, and supporters in Miami, 5,000 of whom have signed petitions asking for his release.

The Justice Department is slowly amassing a case against Posada for masterminding attacks against Cuban targets, using U.S. sources of financing. In June, Antonio Llama, a former director of the Cuban American National Foundation,

made the stunning admission that he had helped CANF collect more than \$1.4 million to finance paramilitary strikes against Castro—including one in 1997 that the FBI believes was masterminded by Posada. Since then, FBI agents have been questioning Posada's alleged collaborators in Union City, who were subpoenaed to appear before a grand jury in Newark, New Jersey, on September 15.

Posada's attorney has pressed for his client's release, citing a Supreme Court ruling barring indefinite detention. The government disclosed at a hearing in August that seven countries—Canada, Mexico, Honduras, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Panama, and El Salvador—had so far refused him. The federal magistrate, Judge Norbert Garney, expressed annoyance that the Justice Department had made no new inquiries to prospective countries since last November. On September 11, Judge Garney recommended that Posada be released. Should the federal judge concur with this recommendation, Posada will leave prison, but he could very well face more serious charges.

In May, I asked Bosch how he felt about the fact that Posada had informed on him. Bosch was having none of it. Waving his hand dismissively, he said the memos were the work of "Castro's people." He added that Posada calls him often from his cell. "Every week, I speak with him," he said. Then he added, "He's not my friend. He's my brother in the struggle."

Bosch is a man who needs a crusade and an enemy. "I would kill him," he says, referring to Castro. "Who wants to more than me? But I can't do any more. I have given it 100 percent." Always uncompromising, he has grown more mercurial and moody in the last year. "After his stroke in November, we learned he had had ten smaller strokes before," his daughter Karen told me. Then she confided that her half brother has schizophrenia. "It gets passed on in a family." Bosch's wife, Adriana, seemed exhausted and teary-eyed on my last visit. "He was better before because his activities fulfilled him," she said. "*Fue su obsesión*—it was his obsession—so he was okay. Now is very difficult." Although he is heartened to know that Castro has been seriously ill, Bosch begrudges him a natural death. "It's a competition to see who dies first," his wife said wearily.

Last year, Orlando García died in Miami, at seventy-eight. He had said he intended to take his secrets to the grave—and he did. Although he dodged the press, García confided to friends that Posada was responsible for the Cubana bombing. "I am going to die in three or four months," he told Veciana. "Why say anything now and damage him?" García's son Rolando tells another story: "My father believed they were all guilty."

Former Venezuelan President Carlos Andrés Pérez, who moved to Miami Beach in 2000, turned eighty-four in October and is disabled by a stroke. At García's funeral, he blamed Castro for the Cubana bombing.

Freddy Lugo drives a cab in Caracas and maintains he was duped into going along on the Cubana flight by Hernán Ricardo, who promised him a new camera. Ricardo has

evidently landed on his feet: according to *The Miami Herald*, he is working for the DEA, though the agency won't confirm it. Venezuelans claim that he fell out with the DEA and is now at large, "somewhere in the Caribbean," some say, or in Thailand or Malaysia.

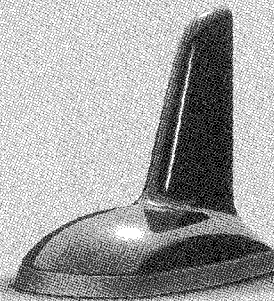
In 2002, Governor Jeb Bush appointed Raoul Cantero, Orlando Bosch's attorney, to the Florida Supreme Court. Cantero is the grandson of Fulgencio Batista.

At eighty, Fidel Castro has lived to see a significant lurch to the left in Latin America. He has sidelined himself from power, but his political agenda is shared by his brother Raúl and National Assembly chief Ricardo Alarcón, who said in early September that Cuba will continue its campaign to bring the masterminds of the Cubana bombing to justice.

In the summer of 1998, a small group of U.S. government investigators visited their counterparts at the Ministry of the Interior in Havana. The purpose was to gather information on the 1997 bombings in Cuba, which violated the U.S. Neutrality Act. The Cubans were hospitable hosts and screened a surveillance video of Luis Posada and two comrades coming and going from the Camino Real Hotel in San Salvador. Upon their return to the United States, FBI investigators discussed the video, and it occurred to them that the Cubans could easily have rid themselves of Posada forever; instead, they had opted to film him. "They'll never get better propaganda than Luis Posada," said one FBI veteran. "He's as good as it gets." ▀

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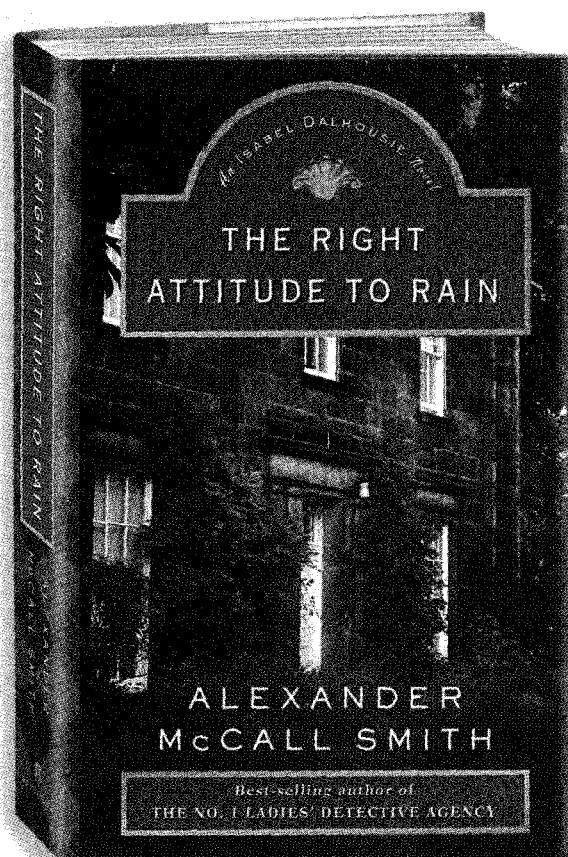
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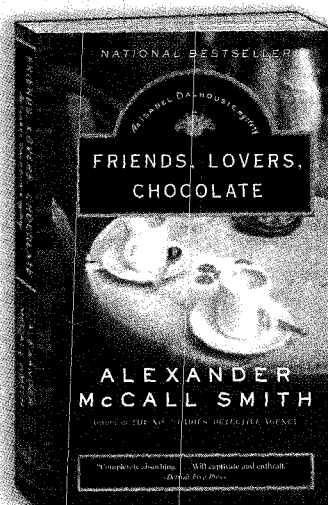
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ANCHOR

THE CRITICS

Books, Manners, Mores

NOVEMBER 2006 | THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY

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by Walter Benjamin

CARRIED AWAY: The Invention of Modern Shopping

by Rachel Bowlby

HARVARD DESIGN SCHOOL GUIDE TO SHOPPING

edited by Chuihua Judy Chung, Jeffrey Inaba, Rem Koolhaas, and Sze Tsung Leong

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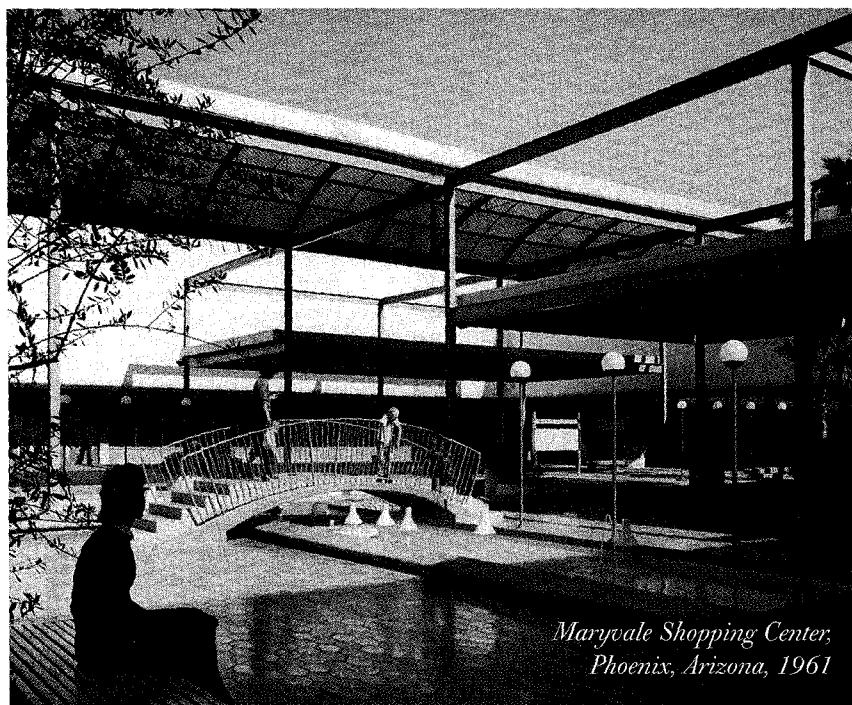
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A guide to additional releases

by Benjamin Healy and Benjamin Schwarz

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*Maryvale Shopping Center,
Phoenix, Arizona, 1961*

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Babes in Toyland

What to read this month

BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

It's this country's favorite form of public interaction and, along with watching television, of recreation. It claims more workers, and fills more space, than any other pursuit—considerably more non-residential construction is devoted exclusively to it, though you can also do it in museums, houses of worship, airports, and hospitals. It wards off depression, emotional and economic. It reflects and promotes subtle and seismic shifts in societal attitudes, so it's at once an unstoppable engine of change and among the most fickle, unpredictable, and vulnerable of human activities. It's the emblem of modernity. Shopping. And in its voracious way it's also become an increasingly fashionable subject for books.

To be sure, novelists have long probed the topic: Balzac, in a celebrated passage in *Lost Illusions*, conveyed the fresh seductiveness of the goods on display in the wooden galleries of the Palais-Royal; Flaubert dissected Emma Bovary's shopping-induced raptures; Zola, in *The Ladies' Paradise*, his fictionalized account of Paris's Le Bon Marche, portrayed both the nitty-gritty workings and the intoxicating allure of that new type of emporium, the department store; Dreiser depicted the novel and intimate pull that consumer goods exercised on the purchaser as his protagonist wandered The Fair, Chicago's lower-middle-class department store, in *Sister Carrie*. And shopping is the subject of what has emerged as

GORDON SOMMERS, COURTESY GRUEN ASSOCIATES

the greatest ruin of twentieth-century cultural criticism: Walter Benjamin's pastiche, **The Arcades Project**—an undeveloped and, at more than 1,000 pages, unfinished (!) minute examination of nineteenth-century Paris's glass-roofed shopping galleries (distant but distinct precursors of the shopping mall) and of the emergence of consumer capitalism.

But thanks to the cultural- and women's-studies fevers of the 1980s and their concomitant—the typical humanities professor's quaint desire to be both a hipster and a scold—the flow of books is ceaseless. Just on the history of department stores there are more than a dozen titles, including Erika Rappaport's pioneering *Shopping for Pleasure*, which cogently argues, to put it far too simplistically, that the provision of ladies' toilets in nineteenth-century

Chung, are sharp and quirky, others not so, including Koolhaas's own pretentious, incoherent contribution.) In its chaotic range and ambition, and in its focus both on the broadest societal and economic developments and on minutiae (foot- and car-traffic patterns, marketing techniques, the innovations—lighting, sprinkler systems, sidewalks, escalators, air conditioning—that enhance shopping's scale and scope), it's almost certainly inspired, for better and worse, by *The Arcades Project*.

That so exalted a figure in the field of architecture would devote himself to so exhaustive a treatise on shopping highlights the symbiosis between that form of art and that form of commerce, a relationship both long-standing—Sullivan, Burnham, Loos, Breuer, Mies, Pei, Philip Johnson, and Gehry all built stores or

“pyramids of the boom-years” (to quote a 1970s Joan Didion essay on them), they illuminate the triumph of mass-market consumerism, the burgeoning of suburbia, the decline of downtowns, and the rise of various federal programs and policies—the FHA, the Interstate Highway System, the Internal Revenue Code (historians and urban planners have spilled an obscene amount of ink debating the extent to which the 1954 tax legislation allowing for accelerated depreciation on real-estate investments was responsible for the mushrooming of malls in the 1950s and '60s)—that nurtured and hastened those developments.

Given these trends, the mall would almost certainly have developed without Gruen, but biography is often the most accessible way to digest such otherwise

The mid-twentieth-century malls, like the great nineteenth-century department stores, responded adroitly to the needs, values, and aspirations of their primary customers: women.

London department stores helped make it possible for women to enter the public sphere (after all, a respectable woman could hardly go about town if there was no place for her to relieve herself) and hence helped catalyze the suffragette movement. Not surprisingly, most of the books are god-awful, though the exceptions include Rachel Bowlby's witty, incisive **Carried Away**, a feminist, psychoanalytically inflected history of and meditation on the subject, a work that's exquisitely sensitive to the exhilarating and stupefying nature of the activity it exposes.

Certainly the grooviest of the tomes is the nearly six-pound, 800-page **Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping**, the product of a Harvard-based venture led by starchitect Rem Koolhaas—whose showmanship contains more than a whiff of quackery—that explores the relationship between shopping and “the urban condition.” Engorged with photos, collages, and maps; cacophonous, often illuminating, sometimes misleading charts and graphs; and forty-two essays by sixteen architects and critics, the book is as clamorous as Koolhaas's architecture. (Some of the essays, such as those by Sze Tsung Leong and Chuihua Judy

malls—and now trendy, as celebrity architects trip over themselves to build emporiums for celebrity fashion designers: Koolhaas (Prada), Gehry (Issey Miyake), and Tadao Ando (Armani). But the architect that the Harvard guide features most prominently is Victor Gruen (1903–1980), a Jewish socialist Viennese refugee from the Nazis, who is referred to with ritual frequency as the father of the shopping mall, and hence as the man who changed fundamentally the American landscape and way of life.

An astonishing number of books and articles have been written about malls (the Harvard guide alone has eight essays largely or wholly about them; at least five books of bibliographies on them have been published; and at least ten novels are set in them). As the locus of 75 percent of total U.S. retail spending in 2005, they're obviously intrinsically important, and criticizing them (as many of the seminal books and articles on them do) is an efficient way for too many writers, especially academics, to establish their progressive/philosophical/urban/philosophical/ethnic/anti-Leave It to Beaver credentials. But they're such an attractive subject mainly because, as

recondite subjects, which is probably why two studies of him have appeared in as many years. (Gruen himself wrote prolifically, yet with the exception of his fascinatingly detailed *Shopping Town USA*, for years the bible of the mall and shopping-center industry, which he cowrote with his business partner, Larry Smith, his oeuvre suffers from chronic self-congratulation and Mitteleuropean gaseousness.) M. Jeffrey Hardwick's **Mall Maker**, a deeply researched (the detailed endnotes are marvelous), conventional narrative, concentrates on Gruen's impact on American society, but almost completely ignores his architectural and design achievements, a subject that Alex Wall, a Dutch architect and urban planner, examines more closely in his **Victor Gruen**, an unusually handsome and well-illustrated book.

Although the idea of a planned shopping center, managed by a single firm and meant to serve car-driving suburbanites, was in place by the mid-1920s, when Kansas City's Country Club Plaza, the first such entity, opened (the primary lesson learned by J. C. Nichols, who developed the gorgeously ornate outdoor complex, was to forget about

elaborate decor and instead concentrate resources to provide copious parking), the refinement of that concept was essentially arrested by the Depression and the war. Gruen's genius was to develop it to perfection, in two strokes. He'd spent his first years in America designing swanky Fifth Avenue specialty stores. Incorporating highly innovative, recessed fronts, he had created a permeable threshold, bringing the store out to the sidewalk and the sidewalk into the store. The new facades, Lewis Mumford fulminated, lured in customers like "a pitcher plant captures flies": with these storefronts Gruen had won what he recognized as a "psychological contest," by seducing the customer not to overcome, but to be oblivious to, the "phobia of entering a store."

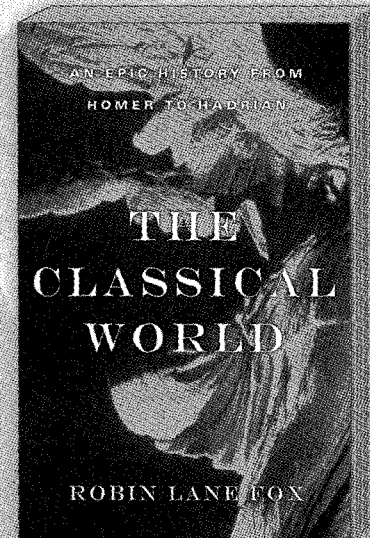
When, in 1954, he finished his first center (Northland, outside Detroit)—an open-air complex with nearly a hundred shops, and with the first suburban branch of Hudson's, the venerable department store, as its "anchor"—Gruen again proved sensitive, perhaps deviously so, to shoppers' psychology and desires. He had recognized that the colossal new suburban population, which had grown by 43 percent in just the previous six years, was largely bereft not only of commercial life but also of community life. Shopping centers, he fervently believed, would provide it, and would thus translate the urbanity of his beloved Vienna to the suburbs. With its auditoriums and club rooms (think coffee percolators and earnest talks on space exploration, *The Family of Man*, and the UN), Northland's civic functions were no doubt somewhat stilted and artificial, but the clean-lined, modernist center—constructed with a remarkably high level of detail, craft, and finish—had colonnaded walks, sophisticated and pleasing graphic design, playful fountains, elaborately landscaped plazas and courts (Gruen grasped that Northland's most important feature was not the buildings but the space between them), and a cornucopia of whimsical, high-middlebrow sculptures, some of which had to be discovered by pedestrians, as they were partially hidden in the plantings (Gruen's budget for them was a then-staggering \$200,000). It was a delightful place to stroll (Northland and Gruen's few other outdoor malls, most notably

Phoenix's Maryvale—alas, all but ignored by Hardwick and Wall—are, along with his New York boutiques, the architect's aesthetic triumphs).

But what neither of these perceptive books sufficiently emphasizes is who was doing the strolling (and who was finding sculptures in the plantings): Gruen understood that mothers and their young children were suburbia's nearly sole daytime inhabitants, and that they—mostly unmoored from their extended families and thus most in need of the community, or at least the public, life that shopping centers promised—would be by a long way Northland's most frequent visitors. Bowlby's assertion that "the history of shopping is largely a history of women" is made more comprehensible in this context by the fact that as early as 1963, according to Betty Friedan, women held 75 percent of purchasing power. As Chung analyzes in the Harvard guide, "Public space has been formed—directly, indirectly, and more significantly than previously understood—by the interaction of women and shopping." To grasp the form and functions that shopping centers and malls have taken, and especially the part they played in mid-twentieth-century American life, it's not enough to assess, as Hardwick and Wall astutely do, the intentions and strategies of their primary creator. Like the great nineteenth-century urban department stores, these temples of consumption responded adroitly to the needs, values, and aspirations of their primary customers, even down to the configuration of the parking spaces (a subject on which mall designers have always lavished exhaustive attention), which were made unusually wide specifically to accommodate women drivers, many of whom were newly licensed.

The legions of critics of these centers, such as the historian Kenneth Jackson, like to point out derisively that in contrast to the vaunted vitality and diversity of the urban streetscape, the centers "cater exclusively to middle-class tastes" and that the "theme of their design is enclosure, protection, and control." Precisely. Enclosure, protection, and control were just what a mother with young children in tow was looking for. But Gruen's great insight, and his great advance from those seductive New York boutiques,

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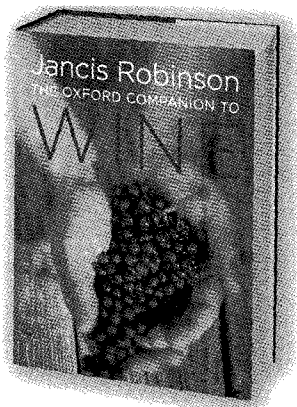
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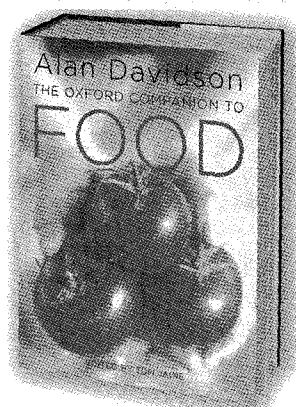
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was to recognize that the same qualities that lured customers into a commercial space could also keep them there, and that if they simply spent more time in that space—even hours consumed in the aimless wandering that children favor—they would ultimately spend more money. People came to Northland to be enriched or entertained, or to discover sculptures. But, as Gruen knew, "[they] did one other thing also. They shopped." Before Northland opened, sales figures for it were projected to be \$35 million in its first year and \$50 million by its fifth; in fact, it brought in \$50 million its first year and \$100 million by its third.

The ideas put into practice at Northland would eventually alter not only the way Americans shopped but also the ways they understood and experienced the purposes and boundaries of the public and commercial spheres. But Gruen wouldn't fully realize these ideas until he built his second shopping center, Southdale, outside Minneapolis. There he resolved several problems that had limited retailing's full fruition, many of which hadn't even been recognized as problems. With its scorching summers and gelid winters, the area around Southdale, Gruen determined, allowed for only 126 days a year in which customers could be expected to drive to a shopping center and meander. The solution was obvious: the first enclosed shopping center. An innovative heat pump (one of the largest in the world, a single system that ventilated, cooled, and heated) kept the mall at a constant temperature of 72 degrees (Gruen claimed that the savings in construction costs—the storefronts could now be made of light and inexpensive materials—would pay for the climate control). Air conditioning had already proved crucial to the development of the department store. Besides permitting customers to remain in the store for longer periods of time throughout the year, it also allowed the building to be larger, which meant not only that more goods could be displayed and sold but also that the store would be more difficult to exit, again creating more opportunity for customers to spend. But the enclosed mall with a garden court at its center—which attracted customers with what Gruen called its "eternal spring" and which

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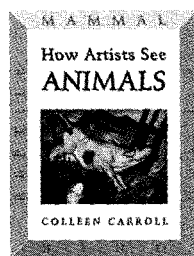
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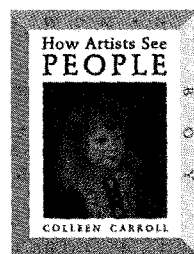
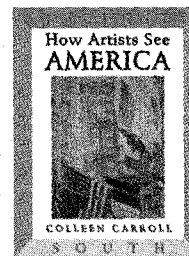
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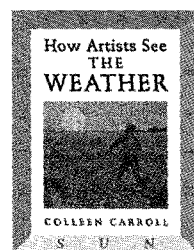
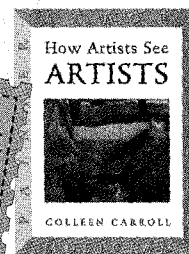
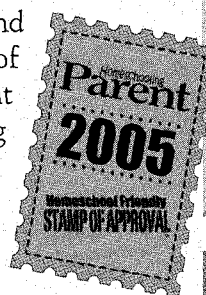
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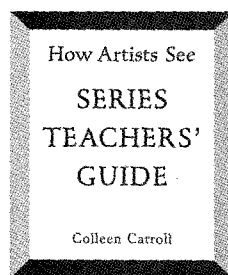
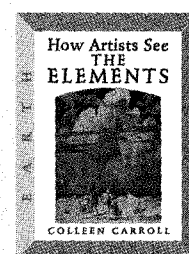
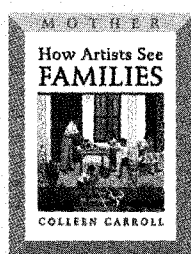
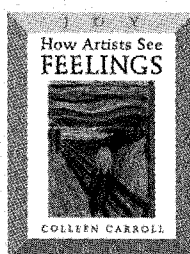
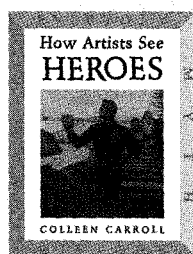
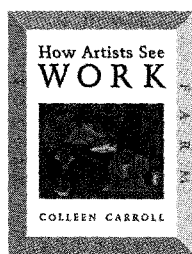
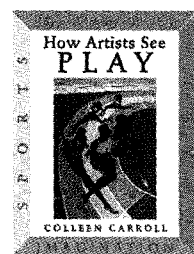
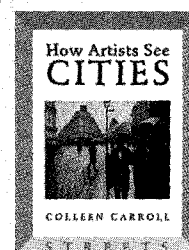


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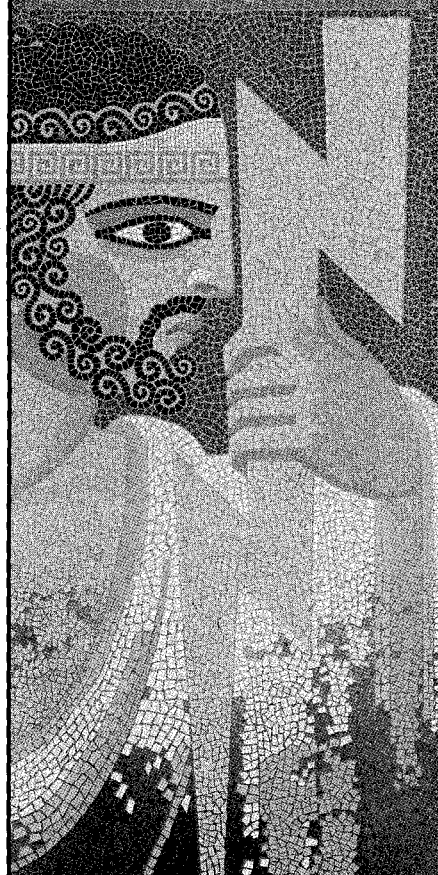
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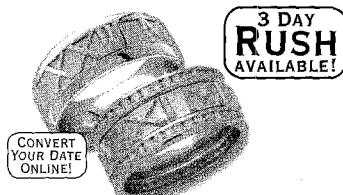
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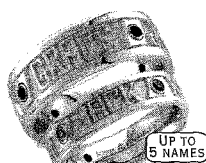
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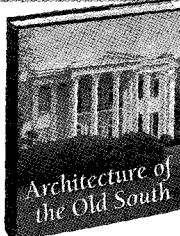


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obviously afforded more "enclosure, protection, and control" than an open-air center—trapped shoppers inside a space larger and even less escapable than any single department store.

In a triumph of cooperative capitalism, the competitor to Southdale's anchor department store was persuaded to locate at the opposite end of the same center; the two rivals together attracted more people to the mall, and made the smaller stores adjacent to the anchors central, rather than peripheral. The increased bustle and density (to heat and cool it efficiently, Gruen built Southdale on two levels; it therefore occupied a far smaller footprint than did open-air centers) in itself attracted yet more people, who stayed longer and bought more.

Gruen thus hit upon a winning formula that he and a small number of other shopping-center architects and developers would replicate and expand on in increasingly tatty versions throughout the country, as nifty speckled tile floors gave way to cheap carpeting that would eventually spread from floors onto walls and columns, and as cheesy and soon-chipped molded plastic replaced nearly everything else. The Gruen formula is tired now, but it had a great run—he alone would ultimately build 45 million square feet of shopping area.

By the late 1960s, Gruen had begun to forsake his creation, and had in fact joined in the chorus of critics who blamed the mall for suburban sprawl and an atomized society. His solution—which has evolved from forlorn pedestrian malls, formed when such cities as Kalamazoo and Fresno closed a few downtown blocks to traffic and local merchants ponied up for some potted plants and multicolored walkways, to such city/shopping hybrids as Santa Monica's Third Street Promenade—essentially involved moving the mall (the suburban version of the urban) to the city. Of course, these pedestrian-oriented shopping zones have proved so popular that developers are now transplanting the urban version of the suburban version of the urban to the suburbs. Shopping is ever adaptable. ▮

Benjamin Schwarz is the literary and the national editor of The Atlantic.

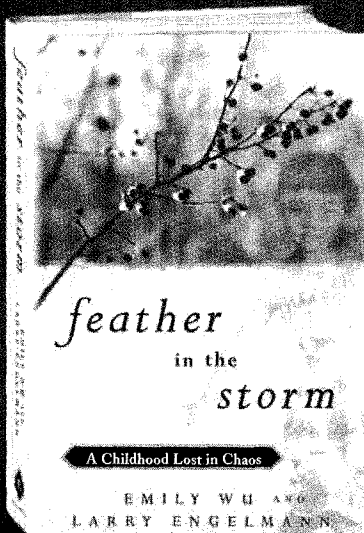
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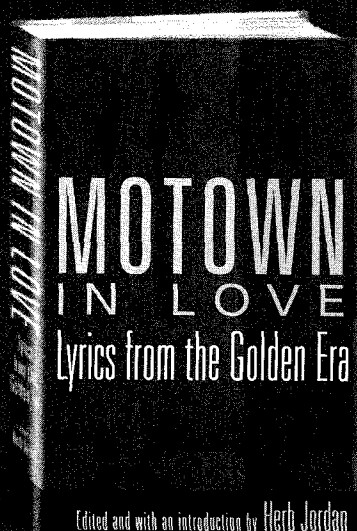
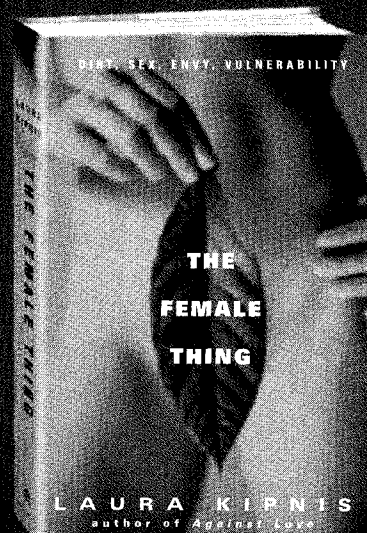


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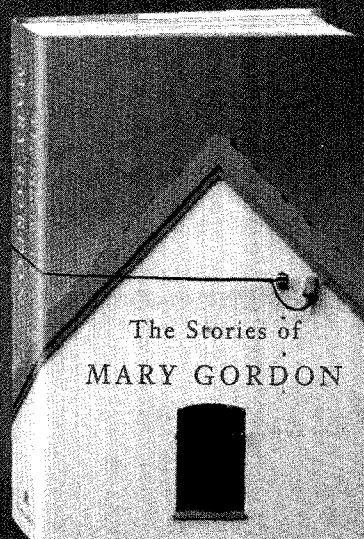


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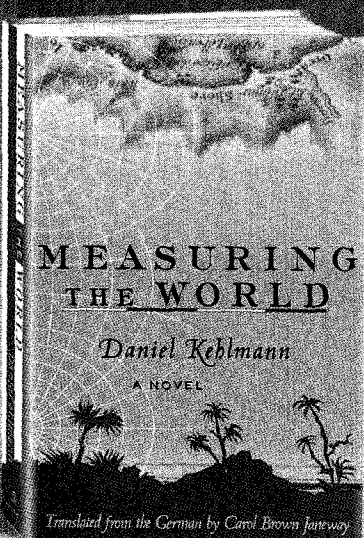
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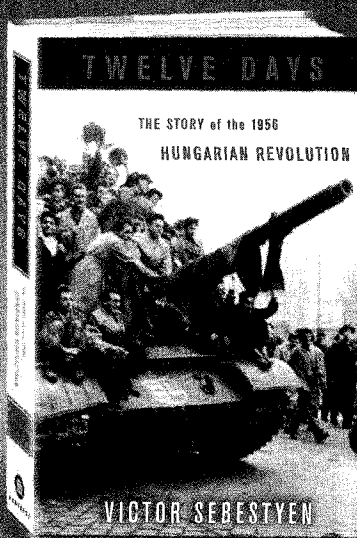


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BOOKS

Production Values

American Idol lets us feel their pain

BY DALE PECK

Even in hindsight, the popularity of *American Idol* is difficult to explain, or at least to predict. Unlike the Swedish *Expedition Robinson*, which spawned the hugely successful *Survivor*, Britain's *Pop Idol* entered the American market with little advance buzz. In fact, according to Simon Cowell in his memoir-cum-guide to stardom, *I Don't Mean to Be Rude, But ...*, U.S. networks worried the show would be "another *Popstars*," a previous British import that had been "a failure" for the WB. After repeated rejections *AI* finally debuted on Fox in summer 2002—at which point, to the surprise of everyone, it quickly became the most popular program on the air. "People kept telling us that we shouldn't

expect the success of the first season," Cowell reports, but despite the nay-saying the numbers have only continued to grow, until what started as a mid-season replacement is now a "billion-dollar brand." A super-chipper Paula Abdul elaborates: "*American Idol* isn't just a television show, it's a phenomenon" that has sold 17 million CDs, generated 2 million concert ticket sales, moved \$50 million in merchandise, and spawned 15 million text messages on top of hundreds of millions of telephone votes. During the fifth-season finale, a gleeful Ryan Seacrest announced that the single episode had received in excess of 63 million votes—"more than any president in the history of our country." Since some

individuals vote "up to 200 times" (a feat even Karl Rove would have a hard time engineering, with or without the help of Diebold voting machines), Seacrest's comparison should be taken with a grain of salt. More quantifiable are the 28 million viewers who tune in to each season's forty or so episodes, generating advertising revenues that surely dwarf the figures just cited. On top of this, dozens of spin-offs run concurrently around the globe: yea, verily, the sun never sets on the *Idol* empire.

These numbers seem even more remarkable when you compare *AI* to the competition: it lacks the dramatically grueling conditions under which contestants on *Survivor* or *The Amazing Race* labor, and, with the exception of a few hotel antics early in the season, eschews the risqué exhibitionism of *The Bachelor* or *Temptation Island*. But: "Who doesn't love a good old-fashioned talent show, after all?" Terry Piper, Ph.D., asks in *The Invisible Revolution: Clay Aiken and the Fans Who Made Him a Star*, apparently not realizing that the answer, as Simon Cowell discovered when he shopped *AI* around, was American television audiences. Dr. Piper attributes the show's appeal to "a general yearning" in the wake of 9/11 "for simpler times when more traditional values prevailed," an assessment that seems a tad reductive, if not simply reactionary, given that almost every reality show to achieve success in the post-9/11 era proffers a straightforward mix of sex and greed. Once *AI* was picked up, however, a few factors did work in its favor. For a start, reality TV had become the hot topic by 2002, and any new offering profited from intense industry and amateur scrutiny. Viewers responded particularly well to host Ryan Seacrest, *AI*'s answer to Dorian Gray, and Simon Cowell, *AI*'s so-called "nasty man," perhaps the most popular figure television audiences have loved to hate since J. R. Ewing (or at least since Richard Hatch won the first season of *Survivor*).

But still, none of these factors—not even the pink-cheeked appeal of the show's contestants, about which more later—explains such Malthusian success. In one sense, Paula nailed it when she called *AI* a "phenomenon"—a happy confluence of circumstances sustained

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by the same banal yet powerful complex of mythologizing misperceptions that saddled the world with *Star Wars* and *Harry Potter*. Though hardly exempt from traditional exegesis, any analysis of such “phenomena” should be taken with the caveat that they’re stubbornly resistant to rational discussion. Nevertheless, before there was a “phenomenon” there was a television show, and that show is still being produced: still auditioned for by tens of thousands, edited to achieve certain effects, and watched by millions. Although not terribly interesting in and of itself, this show is part of the aforementioned wave of reality TV, a genre that has grown more amorphous as it’s grown more pervasive, until it encompasses everything from the hidden-camera shenanigans of Jamie Kennedy and Tom Green, the *No Exit* quarantines of *Survivor* and *Big Brother*, the *in situ* celebrities emplacements of *The Osbournes* and *Newlyweds*, and the game-show-by-any-other-name varietals of *The Apprentice*, *Project Runway*, and, of course, *American Idol*. As Mark Andrejevic points out in his comprehensive and insightful study, *Reality TV: The Work of Being Watched*, such shows “allow the audience to participate by proxy,” from which the genre derives a quasi-governmental legitimacy: just as politicians are drawn from the people they are said to represent, so too were the players in the first generation of reality TV culled from the general populace, and, on the most “democratic” of these shows—*American Idol*, the first season of *Big Brother*—could also be removed by audience voting. If, as they say, art holds up a mirror to life, then what could be more real than a one-way glass behind which a camera records a set of players who look remarkably like the audience at home?

The last year of the old millennium is generally credited as the birth of the new format, with *Survivor*, *Who Wants to Marry a Multi-Millionaire?*, and, to a lesser extent, *Big Brother* dominating prime-time ratings in 2000, but the concept had in fact evolved through any number of experiments in unscripted programming, including *The Tom Green Show* (1994), *The Real World* (1992), *America’s Funniest Home Videos* (1990),

COPS (1989), *The People's Court* (1981), *Real People* (1979), and *An American Family* (1973), all of which take a cue from *Candid Camera*, Allen Funt's fly-on-the-wall show that debuted on the small screen in 1948 (after a less euphonious run on the radio as *Candid Microphone*), and which is generally considered the forerunner of contemporary reality TV.

Clearly, the mechanisms for unscripted programming were well established; what was needed to turn it into a sustainable—profitable—genre was an ethos. In the early 1990s, with little fanfare (and less ethical examination), surveillance footage from both public and private security cameras became

a staple of news programs, and soon spread to the rising tide of "infotainment" magazines. The true-crime footage proved so popular that producers began chasing it down themselves—hence *COPS*, and the now-ubiquitous helicopter shots of suspects fleeing police pursuit. But if pursuing the action produced better results than waiting for something to happen in front of a bracket-mounted camera, how much more exciting would the results be if you provided the players themselves, as well as the incentive to act out on-screen? In the transformation from security tape to reality TV, the very concept of surveillance changed: from being a tool to detect and (at least ostensibly) prevent crime, it became a means of soliciting, if not criminal activity, then at least behavior that falls outside the purview of polite society. This shouldn't be surprising. Think of our earlier metaphor of the camera hidden behind a one-way mirror. The setup, of course, is the eternal conceit of the cop show. In its initial incarnation, the person in front of the mirror didn't realize he was being watched, and unwittingly confessed, either verbally or through visual cues; later, as the trope became familiar, the suspect knew he was being watched, but came to disregard the watcher's presence simply because he was aware

of it, and even to act out for the invisible watcher, so that he *still* ended up confessing. It is precisely this confessional dynamic that dictates the content of virtually all reality programming, the player exposed in the criminal's chair, the viewer safely concealed behind the glass of his or her TV screen.

In this context, O. J. Simpson's televised low-speed flight from police in 1994, and the months of trial coverage that followed, may mark the real beginning of reality TV. The Simpson trial put the Juice back in the public eye; it also gave us Mark Fuhrman, Marcia Clark, Johnnie Cochran, Kato Kaelin, and of course Judge Lance Ito, many

of whom wrote books about their experience, and became well-paid fixtures on the talk-show circuit (a cross-platform branding that seems eerily resonant with *American Idol*'s marketing strategy, among others). Although opinion was divided, it seems fair to say none of these figures was regarded particularly well, whether it was Fuhrman's alleged racism, Clark's incompetence, Cochran's manipulation of the judicial system, or Kaelin's opportunism (or simply the fact that Simpson was widely perceived to have gotten away with murder). This was precisely their appeal: not as moral signposts, but as figures of entertainment detached from genuine moral (let alone legal) culpability. Viewed retrospectively,

the dramatic reenactments and archival footage intercut with talking heads indulging in confessional yet self-justifying speeches—not to mention the constant promise by a smarmy host that things would get only more sordid as the story progressed—looks remarkably like contemporary reality TV, in which life is depicted as a kind of courtroom game where the winners aren't the best people, or even the best players, but the ones willing to lie, cheat, or otherwise debase themselves to earn the rewards of celebrity and cash. As a corollary, it's worth noting that the

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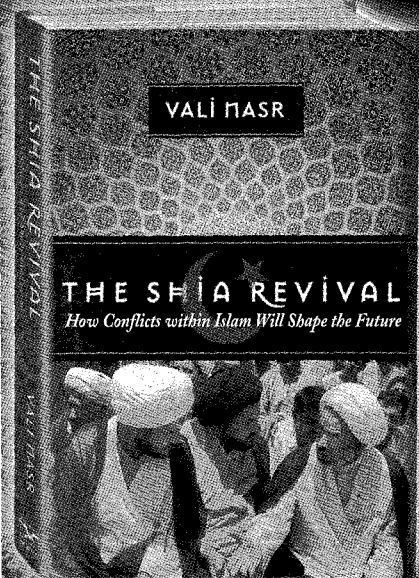
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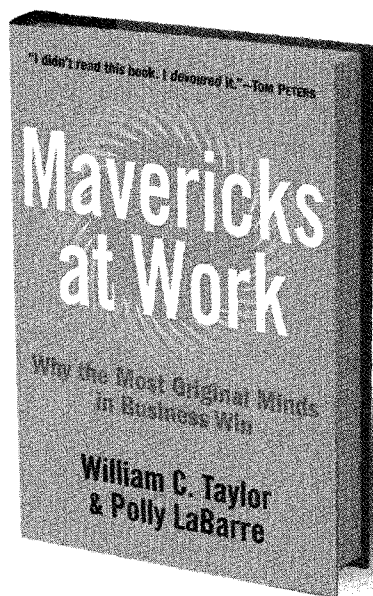
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families of Nicole Brown and Ronald Goldman were widely perceived to have received "justice" not through the criminal-court system, but through the settlement awarded in civil court, which is dishearteningly in concert with a reality-TV ethic in which profit and loss have replaced right and wrong as the primary motivating paradigm.

Of course, it's doubtful these factors mean much to the people who make *American Idol*, or any other reality show. For programmers, the most interesting aspects of the new format concern budgets and scheduling. Much has been made of the cheapness of reality TV, an assertion that centers ... the fact that its players don't command the escalating fees actors on successful series have pulled in for the past several years. These extraordinary sums (Ray Romano, for example, received around \$2 million per thirty-minute episode for demonstrating that he still hadn't lost his Queens accent) are eventually earned back in syndication, but for whatever reason networks have decided that most reality TV won't work in syndication. Often, they even eschew repeats during the course of a season, and because it's difficult to stretch a series composed only of first-run episodes over eight or nine months, many reality-TV programmers have opted to air two or three "mini-seasons" per year. At first it seemed *American Idol* would follow the new pattern, but after the enormous success of the debut season, producers decided to limit the show to one four-and-a-half-month run per year. This bestowed a cachet on *AI* as the most successful of all reality programs, but it also allowed time for the *Idol* concert tour (2 million tickets sold, \$40 to \$75 a pop) as well as the production and release of albums by that season's winner and selected runners-up.

Such a programming schedule might suggest that Dr. Piper was right: that *American Idol* is simply the most successful "good old-fashioned talent show" of all time. Simon Cowell seems to be reinforcing this notion when he chastises a particularly gruesome auditioner: "You've wasted my time. You've wasted your own time. You've wasted

everyone's time." But Cowell's reaction to a singer named Keith Beukelaer, described in his memoir and featured in *The Best & Worst of American Idol Seasons 1-4*, tells a different story.

To say that he was awful was an understatement—I had never heard anyone sing this badly in my life. He was so bad that I heard a crash in the middle of the audition and looked to the back of the room to see that one of the security guys had actually collapsed in laughter ... I could hardly keep a straight face ... "In my opinion," I said, "you are the worst singer in the world." What shocked me was how shocked he was. This guy had just murdered Madonna's "Like a Virgin," and he was standing there amazed that I hadn't praised his vocal.

Rather than scold Beukelaer off the stage, however, Cowell instead asked him to sing another song, during which he and fellow judge Randy Jackson made little attempt to hide their laughter. Let's give Cowell and Jackson the benefit of the doubt and say they allowed Beukelaer to sing again in order to milk the joke (they've got enough to answer for with the singers they praise). But to focus on the humor inherent to bad singing is to miss *AI*'s unique appeal (*America's Funniest Home Videos* has featured such warblers for years, after all, and it's a staple of the sitcom as well): namely, the moment when a deluded auditioner's dream of fame and fortune is shattered before an audience—which is why, after Beukelaer finished his second song, Ryan Seacrest asked him over and over again how he was going to cope with the news that everything he'd pinned his hopes on was now gone. Indeed, after learning how much viewers enjoyed watching people receive these rudest of awakenings, producers added nearly a dozen audition episodes to capitalize on the spectacle.

But whereas most reality contests get nastier as they progress, *AI* takes a different turn: it gets nicer. The bad singers depart, the good singers begin to build a connection with the audience, and even with each other; the victors seem genuinely remorseful when one of the *AI* "family" is voted off each week. The last three months of *American Idol* are less

a singing contest than a kind of litmus test of American tastes—not so much in music, since the finalists (and their singing styles) have been selected by the judges, but in people. Perhaps the first thing one notices is that all five of the show's winners (and four runners-up) have come from the South, and from middle- or working-class backgrounds as well. Trailer homes and churches, rusted-out cars and blue Wal-Mart vests feature prominently on bio reels, further proof (as if W. weren't enough) that anyone who uses a southern accent to invoke the tropes of southern charm and simplicity will have that claim taken at face value. On the one hand, there's the inspiring story of season three's winner, Fantasia Barrino, just nineteen at the time, and the single parent of a two-and-a-half-year-old daughter. During the audition process, the self-described "baby mama" declared: "My lips are big but my talent is bigger," a statement that practically became the season's catchphrase, only to reveal in her memoir *Life Is Not a Fairy Tale* that she draws a picture of those famous lips in lieu of an autograph because she is a "functionin' illiterate" who has to have lyrics read or sung to her so she can memorize them. On the other, there's Kellie Pickler, also nineteen, whose pronunciation of the words "sal-mon" and "cal-a-MAR-i," which grew broader in every iteration, became the running gag of season five. Naiveté? Or just playing dumb? It's hard to say, just as many were left scratching their heads by Pickler's apparently earnest rendition of Bobbie Gentry's "Fancy," a song about a mother who whores out her "white trash" daughter so the latter can have a better life. If, as Dr. Piper suggests, the appeal of this kind of innocence is in fact a reaction to September 11, it would seem to have less to do with a return to "traditional values" than with the quintessentially American belief in the moral purity of ignorance (of which, sadly, our president is again the most apt example).

Perhaps the biggest surprise on the show, however, was the "geek factor," which entered the *AI* lexicon in season two, along with its paired concept, the "granny vote." When Clay Aiken, a skinny redhead with protruding ears, first appeared on the show, judges were



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BY TERRY CASTLE

Olivia, by Dorothy Strachey (1949).

A febrile little tale of student-teacher saphism at a posh French boarding school in the 1880s. When Mademoiselle Julie, the glamorous headmistress of Les Avons, singles out Olivia, the adolescent narrator, for special good-night kisses, Olivia goes bonkers over her. There's never any sex—Mademoiselle J. being the very worst sort of velvet-cloaked, *Phèdre*-quoting nipple-tease—and the story veers into melodrama. But *Olivia* is still the ultimate crushed-out-school-girl novel: dizzyingly erotic despite (or because of?) the old-fashioned setting and the comically high-flown style.

The Charioteer, by Mary Renault (1959).

A yummy, plummy page-turner—*Gone With the Wind* for the educated-pansy set—by a writer best known for her novels about ancient Greece. Laurie, a young British soldier recovering from devastating wounds suffered at Dunkirk, is loved by two men: Andrew, the beautiful and virginal Quaker orderly who cares for him in the hospital, and Ralph, a schoolmate once expelled for homosexuality, who now resurfaces as a handsome naval officer. Which one to choose? (I myself would go for Ralph, whom I imagine looking like George Clooney.) Lots of bedpans, bandage changing, and poetical blathering about Plato, but also a hugely satisfying dollop of the creamiest Homo Romance.

A Single Man, by Christopher Isherwood (1964).

Severe, glinting, sad: a day in the life of George, an aging British expatriate living and teaching in Los Angeles. The surroundings are sybaritic, the tanned USC boys ravishing. But, for the melancholy George—grieving over his dead partner like a fading, fuddled, Shakespearean king—the only way through it is no way at all. Herr Issyvoo at his stark, camera-eyed best.

Poet and Dancer, by Ruth Praver Jhabvala (1993).

Next to *Clarissa*, the saddest book I've ever read. The poet is Angel, the plain, misfit daughter of German refugees living in Manhattan; the dancer is her disturbed cousin Lara. Dimly haunted by the sex play they had as children, and blind to Lara's odiousness, Angel appoints herself Lara's personal slave. I wish I hadn't done something similar once.

The World of Normal Boys, by K. M.

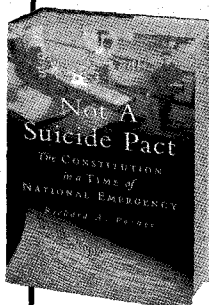
Soehnlein (2000). Squalid, druggy boy-rapture in the Jersey suburbs, in the late '70s. Thirteen-year-old Robin is obsessed with Todd, the big kid next door, whom he spies on from the roof outside his bedroom window. After Robin is involved in a grotesque accident, he starts skipping school and hanging out with a fellow misfit named Scott. They have weird sex. The parents are clueless. The Partridge Family sings. Todd keeps reappearing. You feel that everything in this deft, astonishing first novel really happened.

My Dog Tulip, by J. R. Ackerley (1956).

Religious fundamentalists frequently condemn homosexuality on the grounds that it leads to bestiality. *And right they are!* Though an avid devotee of guardsmen and other virile types, the British writer J. R. Ackerley found the love of his life in Queenie, a female German shepherd he adopted in the mid-1940s. (She is renamed Tulip in this classic—and hilarious—memoir of their liaison.) Looking at pictures of Queenie's sexy snout, lithe haunches, and noble, lofting tail, one can see why Ackerley succumbed: she's a Hot Hot Hottie from Hotsville. Woof.

Terry Castle is a professor of English at Stanford. Her books include *The Apparitional Lesbian* and *Courage, Mon Amie*.

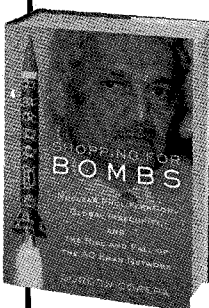
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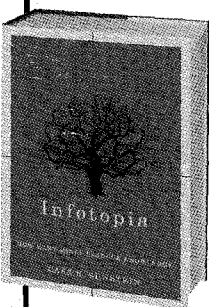


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impressed by his voice but felt he didn't look like a pop star. He was eventually cut, but during the wild-card round viewers voted him back in, and from there all the way to second place (in a close vote that may have been marred by technical glitches). The geek factor said something about American tastes (or at least about the tastes of the people who watch *American Idol*), but it also served as surprising proof that the winner of *AI* was in fact chosen by America, despite producers' attempts to control the outcome through the amount of airtime early favorites are given, the finalists they pick, or clear tugs at viewers' heartstrings (in season three, for example, apparently in reaction to fears that Diana DeGarmo might pull out an upset, Ryan Seacrest placed Fantasia's daughter, Zion, in the singer's arms after one of her performances). If the show's makers can't actually control who wins it, they have at least managed to engineer a slight stylistic eclecticism: in the first two seasons, the finalists were almost exclusively vanilla pop singers, from which came squeaky-clean Kelly Clarkson and "velvet teddy bear" Ruben Studdard (and of course Clay Aiken). Season three featured the so-called "Battle of the Divas," resulting in a win for the gospelly Fantasia Barrino. In season four, *AI* actively courted country singers, giving us eventual winner Carrie Underwood. Producers also began featuring more rock-and-roll singers that year, which gave the show runner-up Bo Diddley, as well as season-five winner Taylor Hicks (who also profited significantly from the geek factor).

But all of this only underscores the fact that *American Idol*, despite Simon Cowell's many objections to the contrary, is less a talent show than a karaoke show. In his memoir, Cowell proudly reports he was labeled "the Antichrist of the music industry" early in his career for putting out records by the World Wrestling Federation, the Power Rangers, and a pair of popular television puppets called Zig and Zag. What he understood was that it's not always about "song choice" or "the music," as the *AI* judges so often say, but about the context that's created for the person (or puppet, or action figure) singing—and *American Idol*, if not by design then by

dint of its own success, has created one of the most powerful contexts for moving product the music industry has ever seen. Push too hard at any performance—even Kelly Clarkson's Grammy-winning second album, which was widely said to have "distanced" the singer from her *Idol* origins—and you realize there is no there there. Nothing except an endlessly renewable resource of hopeful children, who, like the privileged recipients of a Golden Ticket in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, have been granted access to the sanctum sanctorum of their favorite thing in the world. If their youth doesn't exactly render them blameless, it certainly excuses them from any real responsibility for the show and its effects. But if you can't blame children, you can't praise them, for the same reason; lacking full subjectivity, they can only merit emotional reactions, not moral ones. If we are being honest (to borrow another of Cowell's catchphrases), we will admit that we can't judge them: we can only judge ourselves.

"The position of the voyeur," as Andrejevic reminds us, "enacts not the desire to see and control so much as the drive to 'make oneself seen.'" Or, to shift the focus slightly, as Susan Sontag does in *Regarding the Pain of Others*, her essay on the history of war photography: "There is shame as well as shock in looking at the close-up of a real horror." Although it seems inappropriate to compare war and, well, "a good old-fashioned talent show," it is nevertheless this feeling of shame that best summarizes my reaction to the televised humiliations of deluded children who have placed all their hopes on a dream that, even if they did have talent, still has a one-in-a-million chance of coming true. The common rejoinder to this argument is that the contestants have placed themselves on display of their own free will. Many rejected auditioners claim that the experience itself has worth—only losers don't try, as the old saw has it, and hey, in return for their public fall from grace, they get to be on TV. But it isn't the images themselves that make one feel shame. It is, rather, the recognition that one is a member of a society that takes pleasure in such humiliations. Just as cinema anesthetized audiences from the

traditional connection with live players, so did television further atomize audience members from each other. In the privacy of our own homes, we gawk at scenes that we couldn't watch openly in public, and only after Nielsen has conferred its statistical, amoral legitimacy do we own up to the fact that we, like our neighbors, take pleasure in others' pain. In essence, our one-way mirror has been reversed, as the activity of watching is revealed to be every bit as illicit as what is being watched.

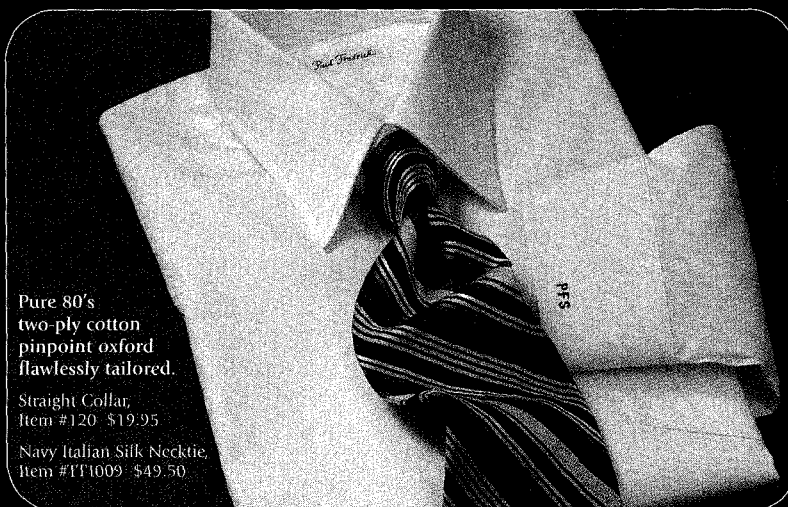
Perhaps at this point it's worth changing the channel to see what else is on. The one genre of "scripted programming" that seems not to have suffered in the wake of reality TV is the mystery in all its forms: cop shows, courtroom and forensic dramas, the quirky detective whose personality tics contribute to his increased powers of observation and deduction. If reality TV is in fact about watching a criminal activity, then it seems to be matched only by a fascination with seeing criminals brought to justice. So what crime do Americans secretly believe they've committed and want to have exposed? Is it the crime of inauthenticity, or that their authentic lives are base and greedy? Or is it the fear that the most talented society on earth can now do nothing more than imitate itself—that American life, like *American Idol*, has become a karaoke show (and an import at that)? If this is indeed the case, then *American Idol* represents both the failure of empathy and its inadequate balm, the crucifixion of a succession of deluded children smoothed over by the worship of a select few singled out for chance adoration. But in the midst of all this, it's important to remember that something like *AI* is not cause but symptom: that watching TV, rather like voting, is one of those individual but cumulative experiences in which you can only respond to the choices placed before you. Given the fact that Americans have decided they don't want their presidents to be real, why should we expect them to care about their pop stars? **A**

Dale Peck is the author of Hatchet Jobs: Writing on Contemporary Fiction, The Lost Cities, which will be published in January, and The Garden of Lost and Found, due out in June.

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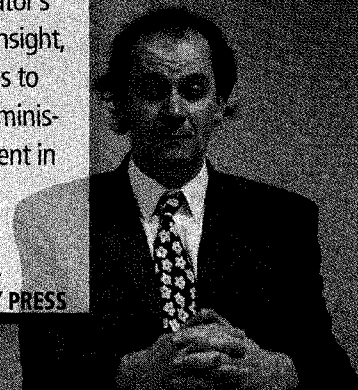
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A French military checkpoint in Algiers, 1960

BOOKS

A French Quarrel

What Algeria's past can—and can't—tell us about the present day

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

It was arguably fair, when André Maurois finished his *Histoire de la France*, to permit him a small allowance of *la gloire* and to agree with his conclusion that “The history of France, a permanent miracle, has the singular privilege of impassioning the peoples of the earth to the point where they all take part in French quarrels.” And it was certainly true, when Alistair Horne began his long study of the Algerian war (or the Algerian revolution), that no sentient person could fail to share his conviction that France in 1789, 1848, 1871 (the Paris Commune), 1916 (Verdun), and 1940 (the defeat and capitulation that led to Vichy) was in some sense both the mother and the daughter—and perhaps also the orphan—of modern history.

At all events, there is no doubt that the eight-year struggle for Algeria was momentous for *le monde entier* as well as for France herself. The intense and dramatic fighting marked the emergence of militant pan-Arab nationalism

as well as, to some extent, the revival of Islam as a modern political force. It was one of the initial tests of the validity of the United Nations in bringing new states and countries to independence. It became an important early sideshow in the Cold War, with the United States this time attempting to play the role of an anticolonial power. And it was a reprise, at some remove, of the fratricide between Gaullist and Vichyite forces that had ceased only a decade before the hostilities in Algeria broke out.

A history so intricately filiated will soon disclose the lineaments of tragedy, and Horne's achievement—in a book first published in 1977—was to speak with gruff respect of the might-have-beens without losing his concentration on the blunt and unavoidable facts. Had liberated France in 1945 begun to speak of the emancipation of its colonized peoples in the same tones that

it demanded so peremptorily for itself (and had it realized that the world of European dominion was never coming back), the history of North Africa—and indeed, Indochina—might have been radically different. Horne's title is taken from Rudyard Kipling's poem “The White Man's Burden,” which was originally addressed to Henry Cabot Lodge, Theodore Roosevelt, and other Americans who were pondering what to do with the Philippine Islands after shattering the Spanish empire in 1898. But Algeria in 1945 was a province of a foredoomed French empire, so no invocation of the old *mission civilisatrice* had even a prayer of working.

Least of all did the impossible scheme of keeping Algeria as an actual *département* of France have such a chance. Relatively sober steps had been taken, especially under the prime

ministership of Pierre Mendès-France, to bring independence to Tunisia and Morocco, and to end the long misery and shame of France's nostalgia for a renovated empire in Vietnam, which ended all in one day at the bat-

tle of Dien Bien Phu. When it came to Algeria, Mendès-France borrowed from an old plan, for modest autonomy, first evolved by his predecessor Léon Blum.

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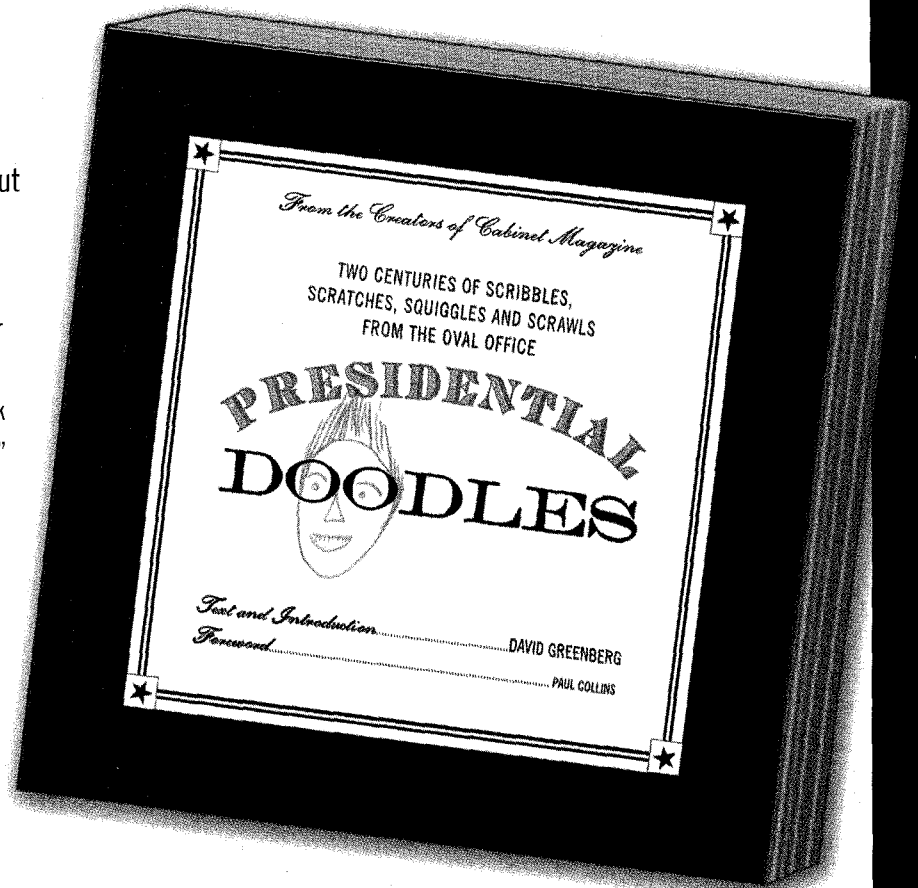
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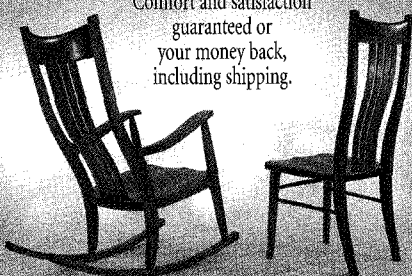
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It isn't exaggerating by much to say that both of these Jewish Frenchmen—products of the campaign to vindicate Captain Dreyfus—were viciously thwarted by a white-settler movement whose allegiance was to Pétain and Poujade, and in some cases to Charles Maurras and the Action Française. Every move to reform Algeria even slightly was vetoed by a *pied-noir* lobby that was addicted to overplaying its own hand.

This grandiose primitivism was not shared, as Horne brilliantly and movingly demonstrates, by the military men upon whom the *pieds-noirs* depended. Many of these soldiers had fought against Vichy and its Nazi backers (in French Africa, in the Middle East, or in France itself), and they had a concept of republican virtue, as well as an *esprit de corps*, that commands respect even at this distance. The same can be said of Jacques Soustelle, the brilliant, passionate consul who was, in the end, almost driven mad by the feeling of having been betrayed from Paris. When the *pied-noir* coup took place in Algiers, and was proclaimed from the balcony, it was announced—in a sort of perverse *homage* to a degenerated Jacobinism—by a "Committee of Public Safety." In a comparable parody of anti-imperialism, the rightist mob in those days of May 1958 made one of its first acts the torching of the U.S. Cultural Center in Algiers.

By then, however, the curtain was already falling. The Anglo-French collusion in the 1956 invasion of Egypt, with its calamitous outcome, had not only written finis to European colonialism in the Arab world but impelled Washington to adopt a course that implicitly accepted independence as inevitable. Given the strong, if mainly rhetorical, support of the Soviet bloc for the Algerian Front de Libération Nationale (whose forerunner was founded on the day that Dien Bien Phu fell, and which had in its ranks hardened soldiers who had once fought under French colors in Indochina), all that was lacking was a French statesman who could see the need to disembarass his country of those who ostensibly were the most devoted to it. The man who would perform this brilliant political—and rhetorical and emotional—

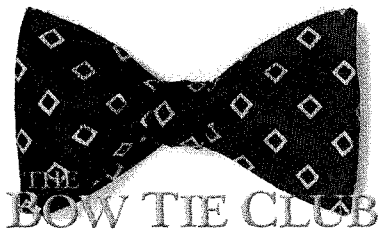
feat had, as we know, been waiting for the call for a long time, and Horne does well to keep him offstage until almost halfway through this lengthy book. Charles de Gaulle could not be outshone by anybody who wished to speak of the destiny of France and the French, and his contempt for the Algerian right went back all the way to the Vichy regime, which it had supported. (His disdain for treason cut both ways: he could never bring himself to utter a good word about the quarter of a million or so *harkis*, those Algerian Muslims who took the side of France and paid a dreadful cost for it.)

Like the good historian he is, Horne leaves open the question of whether all this was as inevitable as it now appears. He tends to assume the long-run victory of colonial insurgencies and the near impossibility of defeating them—using the IRA of the 1970s as an example that now seems anachronistic—but he concedes that there were several moments when the FLN was nearly crushed, illuminates the deep divisions within its ranks that at several points were almost lethal to it, and reminds us almost casually that oil was not found in Algeria until 1958 and that even while it was negotiating with the rebels, France was exploding its first nuclear devices in the Sahara. Yes, indeed it might have been otherwise, as de Gaulle was forced to admit when, himself besieged by strikes and riots ten years after the Algerian coup had provoked his own seizure of power, he was obliged to fly secretly to Germany and beg for the loyalty of the mutinous generals he had exiled to NATO.

This is not the only way in which Algeria continued to haunt France, and continues to do so. There are now some 5 million people of Algerian provenance living in France, many of them strongly attracted to Islamic fundamentalist ideas. Their presence is rejected by a large and growing neofascist party led by a brutish veteran of the *Algérie française* movement named Jean-Marie Le Pen. During the civil war in Algeria in the 1990s, when the FLN and the army were able to repress an Islamist insurgency only by employing the most pitiless measures, an Air France plane was hijacked by

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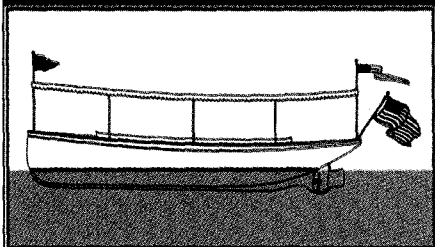
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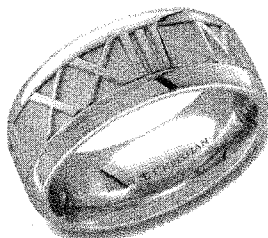
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A CHRONOLOGY OF THE ALGERIAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

May 8, 1945. While France celebrates VE Day, Muslim protesters in Sétif organize to demand Algerian independence. What begins as a march becomes a massacre: the protesters murder more than 100 European settlers, or *pieds-noirs*, and French armed forces retaliate by killing (according to various estimates) between 1,000 and 45,000 Muslims.

November 1, 1954. Emboldened by the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu, the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) launches armed revolts throughout Algeria and issues a proclamation calling for a sovereign Algerian state. The French are unimpressed but deploy troops to monitor the situation.

August 1955. The FLN begins targeting civilians, inciting a mob that kills more than 120 people in Philippeville. Between 1,200 and 12,000 Muslims are killed in retaliation by French troops and by *pied-noir* "vigilante committees." Jacques Soustelle, then governor-general of French Algeria, resolves not to compromise with the revolutionaries.

September 30, 1956. The FLN attempts to draw international attention to the conflict by targeting urban areas. The Battle of Algiers begins when three women plant bombs in public venues. Algiers erupts into violence.

May 1958. A mob of *pieds-noirs*, angered by the French government's failure to suppress the revolution, storms the offices of the governor-general in Algiers. With the support of

French army officers, they clamor for Charles de Gaulle to be installed as the leader of France. The French National Assembly approves. De Gaulle is greeted in Algeria by Muslims and Europeans alike.

September 1959. Increasingly convinced that French control of Algeria is untenable, de Gaulle pronounces that "self-determination" is necessary for Algeria. *Pied-noir* extremists are aghast. The FLN is wary of de Gaulle's declaration.

April 1961. A few prominent generals in the French army in Algeria, clinging to a hope of preserving *Algérie française*, attempt to overthrow de Gaulle. This "generals' putsch" is unsuccessful.

May 1961. The first round of negotiations between the French government and the FLN commences in Evian, but is not productive.

March 1962. After a second round of negotiations in Evian, the French government declares a cease-fire.

March–June 1962. Despairing *pieds-noirs* in the Organisation de l'Armée Secrète (OAS) mount terrorist attacks against civilians (Muslim and French). The FLN and the OAS ultimately conclude a truce.

July 1, 1962. A referendum is held in Algeria to approve the Evian Agreements, which call for an *Algérie algérienne*. Six million Algerians cast their ballots for independence.

militants who planned to crash it into the Eiffel Tower. (One wonders how different things might have been if *that* action had inaugurated our new age of transnational suicide-murder.)

In a much-too-brisk introduction to this new edition, Horne makes some rather facile comparisons with Iraq. The initial analogy does not hold at all: there is not a huge white-settler population in Mesopotamia; the United States does not consider Iraq to be a part of its metropole; the violence there is mainly *between* Arabs and Muslims, while the large

Kurdish minority—loosely comparable perhaps to the Kabyle or Berber population of Algeria—fights stoutly on the American side. Moreover, it would be insulting to compare the forces of al-Qaeda and *revanchiste* Baathism to the FLN, which made consistent appeals to the discrepant ethnic groups in its country and which even asked for—and often got—support from the large Jewish community, whose members had suffered at the hands of the colonial right. Envoys from the al-Zarqawi school are furthermore unlikely to be received—

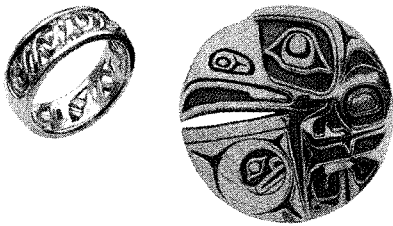
as were the tough and often brilliant diplomats of the FLN—at the United Nations, whose headquarters and personnel in Baghdad they blew up. In Horne's bare and scrupulous account, it is the nihilistic tactics and propaganda of the colonialist Organisation de l'Armée Secrète that put one in mind of the bin-Ladenists. He emphasizes the problem of torture, which has indeed been allowed to work its poison on American policy in Iraq, but his own very exhaustive discussion of the way that this horror influenced Algeria makes it plain that official cruelty was a stern principle as well as a universal practice, and that this was not even denied, let alone punished. It would have been far more absorbing had he devoted his considerable expertise to answering the question, How was it that Algeria in the 1990s became the first country to defeat a full-scale jihad and *takfir* rebellion, which had at one point threatened to overwhelm the entire state and society? In other words, this is no longer a question of the world being privileged to observe French quarrels, and perhaps allowed to participate vicariously in them; it is more a matter of understanding one of the many origins of a current and permanent crisis.

Horne is a mild British Tory with a true feeling for France but a rather limited understanding of the "left." However, one of his recurrent tropes did stay in this reviewer's mind. He writes often about the honorable role of the secular and democratic forces, in both France and Algeria, that attempted to prevent and then to alleviate a war of mutilation versus torture, and of gruesome mutual reprisal. The world chooses to remember Albert Camus as the foremost personality among these, but Horne gives us many important reminiscences of Messali Hadj and Ferhat Abbas, and other brave Algerian figures (not "moderates," in the current patronizing argot) who might, if they could not have stopped the war entirely, have prevented it from taking a savage form that in some ways still persists. Must such people always lose? It is a question that this generation, too, will have to face—and have to answer. ▀

Christopher Hitchens is a contributing editor of The Atlantic and a columnist for Vanity Fair.

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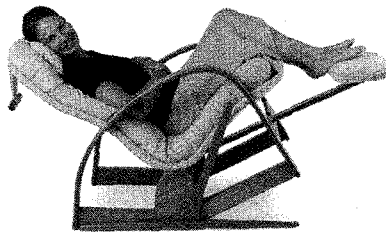


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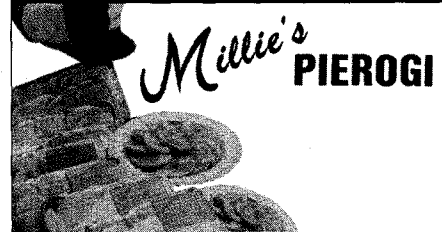
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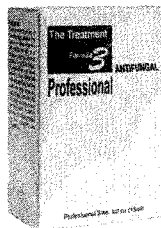
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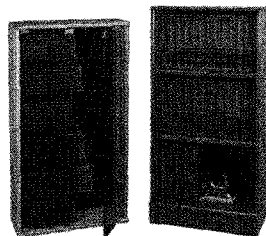
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A guide to additional releases

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CURRENT AFFAIRS



Ethical Realism

by Anatol Lieven
and John Hulsman (Pantheon)

Two foreign-policy hands with divergent politics make common cause to argue against the messianic excesses of current U.S. foreign policy. Lieven and Hulsman are passionate in their sobriety and remarkably concrete about the steps to be taken, calling for a realistic assessment of national interest and a skeptical restraint à la Reinhold Niebuhr.

The Conservative Soul

by Andrew Sullivan (HarperCollins)
Reacting against a similar strain of moralistic maximalism, a *New Republic* senior editor and prominent blogger attempts to resuscitate a conservatism rooted in limits, humility, and doubt. Sullivan's conception of "conservatism" is quite narrow, however, defined as it is in opposition to a vague "fundamentalism" (which here seems to run the gamut from leftism to Bushism to Islamism); the result is an abstract creed, oddly self-congratulatory in its self-effacement.

The Trouble With Diversity

by Walter Benn Michaels (Metropolitan)
A withering examination of how the celebration of cultural and ethnic difference obscures our yawning economic divide. Michaels argues that "diversity" is a shibboleth because it presents a false ideal of social justice, one that in fact serves the interests of the most educated and advantaged segments of society. This is a refreshing, angry, and important book.

Soldier

by Karen DeYoung (Knopf)
Although this biography is not the long-awaited (and possibly never-to-be) tell-all in which Colin Powell reveals everything he was really thinking during his tenure in the Bush administration, it is a consistently interesting recollection of his varied career, shot through with heavy doses of duty, honor, and rectitude.

HISTORY



God's War

by Christopher Tyerman (Harvard)
Tyerman, an Oxford scholar, combines vigorous argument and nuanced analysis in this deeply learned chronicle of the Crusades. A work that concentrates on the "utopianism armed with myopia; the elaborate, sincere intolerance; the diversity and complexity of motive and performance," it's the best single-volume treatment of this still-controversial and fraught subject.

Dynasties

by David S. Landes (Viking)
An economic historian examines the divergent legacies of eleven powerful business families. Although today's conventional management wisdom looks askance at the family firm, Landes argues that it is crucial as a business model, both for its inherent stability and for the powerful example it offers entrepreneurs in the developing world.

SOCIETY and CULTURE



Norman Rockwell:

The Underside of Innocence

by Richard Halpern (Chicago)
An occasionally ridiculous but nevertheless persuasive Freud-tinged assessment of the myriad perversions (sexual and otherwise) that lurk just beneath the surface of the illustrator's wholesome oeuvre. Rockwell emerges not as a dirty old man, but rather as an engaged artist fiercely alive to the complexities of the titular virtue.

Awake in the Dark

by Roger Ebert (Chicago)
A greatest-hits collection from the famed movie critic, including interviews with directors, essays on a variety of topics, and the original review of Ebert's favorite film from each year between 1967 and 2005.

The Homework Myth

by Alfie Kohn (Da Capo)
Parents take note: this is a stinging jeremiad against the assignment of homework,

which the author, a prominent educator, convincingly argues is a wasteful, unimaginative, and pedagogically bankrupt practice that initiates kids into a soul-sucking rat race long before their time.

Through the Children's Gate

by Adam Gopnik (Knopf)

A collection of the longtime *New Yorker* writer's essays about his family's return to Manhattan after five years of living in France. If you like your provincial cosmopolitanism delivered in flawless prose, then this charming, insufferable book is for you.

The Blind Side

by Michael Lewis (Norton)

The author of *Moneyball* turns his analytical gaze to football, and the sequence of events by which the left offensive tackle—once an anonymous outpost for oafish fat kids—has become the second-highest-paid position in the NFL. Interwoven less than seamlessly is the gripping and uplifting tale of a promising left-tackle prospect who overcame a rough childhood in inner-city Memphis to make it to the college-football big time.

BIOGRAPHY and MEMOIR



Point to Point Navigation

by Gore Vidal (Doubleday)

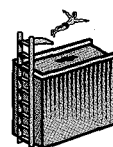
In a sort of sequel to his excellent 1995 memoir, *Palimpsest*, Vidal chronicles the past forty years of his life among various clutches of literati, glitterati, and royalty. Mortality haunts this volume (the most affecting passages cover the recent death of Vidal's partner of fifty years), but what's perhaps most poignant is the book's unevenness—a fierce literary wit having grown somewhat weaker with age.

Things I Didn't Know

by Robert Hughes (Knopf)

The noted art critic recounts his Australian boyhood, his deepening romance with the art world, and the heady atmosphere of 1960s London, as well as the horrific 1999 traffic accident that almost took his life and made him a pariah in his homeland.

FICTION, POETRY, LITERARY STUDIES



Restless

by William Boyd (Bloomsbury)

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stylists and storytellers in the English language, an eccentric English grandmother and garden enthusiast reveals to her daughter that she was a Russian émigré and a spy for Great Britain during the Second World War. Now she fears someone is trying to kill her.

One Good Turn

by Kate Atkinson (*Little, Brown*)

Atkinson's energetic Whitbread-winning first novel was satisfying in every way; her subsequent three books, while sophisticated stylistically and intellectually, were too far removed from reality to be emotionally compelling. With book number 5, *Case Histories*, she hit the jackpot again, putting her skill with complex plots to excellent use, in a literary mystery infused with her characteristic quirk and verve. Now, clear-eyed Jackson Brodie reappears to become entangled in this new multilayered mystery set in Edinburgh.

The Road

by Cormac McCarthy (*Knopf*)

A man and his son struggle across a postapocalyptic landscape. A terrifying and moving story of mankind's baseness and nobility, rendered in the self-conscious, affected prose that has consistently wowed the critics.

Thirteen Moons

by Charles Frazier (*Random House*)

Ten years after the mega-hit *Cold Mountain*, Frazier has produced another epic historical novel, this one a first-person account spanning the nineteenth century and set on the southern frontier. The protagonist tries on a variety of colorful careers—twelve-year-old trading-post operator, white chief of the Cherokees, Confederate colonel, U.S. senator—and pines for a lost love. It's chockablock with vivid period detail, but annoying in its anachronistic, smug, predictably progressive attitudes.

The Aeneid

translated by Robert Fagles (*Viking*)

Fagles, who has rendered the best contemporary translations of Homer, now interprets the cooler, more stately, and in many ways less accessible Virgil. The result: a triumph, and the *Aeneid* for our age, if not necessarily for the ages.

All Aunt Hagar's Children

by Edward P. Jones (*Amistad*)

These stories—formal in tone, precise in style, intricately imagined, and



arrestingly specific in their evocation of place and time—offer an intimate and impressively varied look at African American life in Washington, D.C., throughout the twentieth century. Jones accords his characters so much respect that he seems almost to have observed them from the inside out, rather than to have created them. To date, his most famous work is *The Known World*, a novel about a black slaveholder. These stories (several of which were published in *The New Yorker*), too, demonstrate his understanding of the force of circumstance and the complexity of human nature.

The Right Attitude to Rain

by Alexander McCall Smith (*Pantheon*)

McCall Smith, best known for his plentiful No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency books, featuring the Botswanan detective Precious Ramotswe, presents the third installment in a series about another headstrong heroine, Isabel Dalhousie. Together with her housekeeper, Grace, Isabel is always searching for the answers to local mysteries—and in this book, she finds not only answers but love, as well.

What Came Before He Shot Her

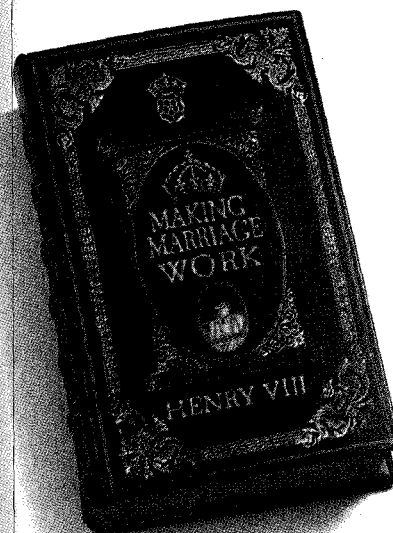
by Elizabeth George (*HarperCollins*)

Fans of the long-running Inspector Lynley series were stunned when, in the final pages of George's last book, *With No One as Witness*, Lynley's pregnant wife was shot by a stranger on their doorstep. *What Came Before He Shot Her* is the story of the time leading up to that event—from the perspective of the stranger himself. Another winner from the current master of the classic English mystery.

Lisey's Story

by Stephen King (*Scribner*)

King sucks us in yet again, binding us so completely to the story and the characters that by the time he's scaring the pants off us, we're too committed to close the book. Lisey, the fiftysomething widow of a famous writer living in—where else?—inland Maine, takes on part of her dead husband's madness as she goes through his study after his death. As much about the facets of longtime marriage as it is about the characters themselves, *Lisey's Story* offers a poignant glimpse at abiding love and the tides of grief, and the internal language of relationships of all kinds.



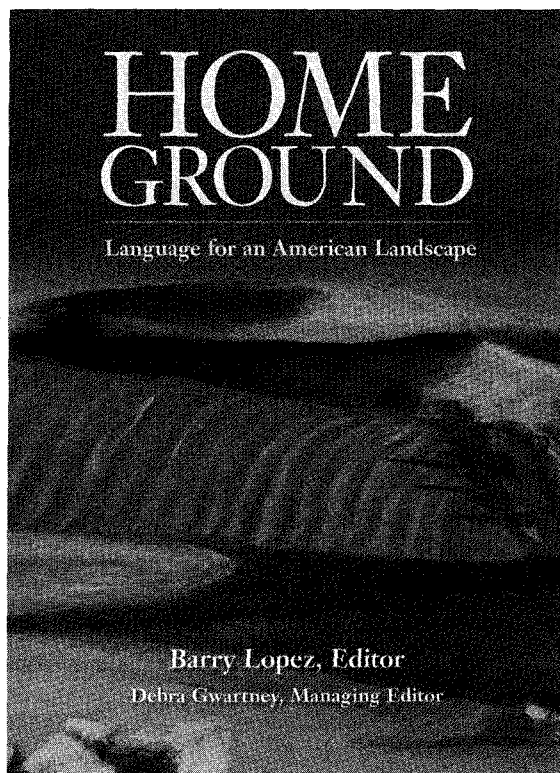
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PURSUITS & RETREATS

NOVEMBER 2006 | THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY



TRAVELS

The Spell of San Miguel

A Mexican hill town's indolent beauty belies its fiery past

BY MARTHA SPAULDING

When a friend announced last winter that she would once again be renting a house for a month in San Miguel de Allende, and invited me to stay with her, I decided to accept. The thought of spending early March in Mexico rather than Massachusetts was too powerful to resist.

I'd never visited Mexico, which in my mind was a vague jumble of Hollywood westerns, news reports about immigration, and a cuisine I've always loved. And not in this incarnation would a place like Cancún or Acapulco induce me to make the trip. San Miguel was said to be safe and generously larded with *norteamericano* retirees, which appealed to the timid monolingualist in me. Its setting, in the country's northern central highlands,

evoked images of Italian hill towns, and the guidebooks I consulted promised all the ingredients of a restorative vacation: numerous artists and art galleries; a bilingual public library complete with a stage for cultural events; plenty of good restaurants; pretty residential streets with views of the surrounding countryside; and handsome colonial architecture, preserved by San Miguel's status as a Mexican national monument. Mexico's revolution against Spain began in Guanajuato, the state in which San Miguel sits, and one of its greatest heroes, Ignacio Allende, was born and lived in the town. I decided to shape my stay around the dramatic events of the revolution's first days.

The heart of San Miguel is the Plaza Principal, where baroque mansions and

arcades ring the *jardín*, a densely green resting place for tourists and residents alike. The plaza's wrought-iron benches and street lamps, fountains, bandstand, and balloon sellers create the effect of a European park. The treetops are rigorously pruned into Tinkertoy lollipops, and above them soars the late-nineteenth-century facade of La Parroquia, the city's parish church. Allende, whose name was appended to San Miguel's in honor of his role in the independence movement, was born in a grand house on the southwest corner of the plaza. The privileged son of a wealthy Spanish merchant, he nevertheless had a *mosca* in his soup: the presumably degenerative effects of having been born elsewhere than in Spain relegated him and his fellow *criollos* to second-class status in the colonial aristocracy. They were resentful. And after Napoleon high-handedly put his brother Joseph on the Spanish throne in 1808, fracturing loyalty to the crown, they were rebellious, as well.

Diagonally across the plaza sits a house that belonged to Allende's brother.

THE TRAVEL ADVISORY

Places to Stay

San Miguel's many convenient hotels range from luxurious converted haciendas to art-laden B&Bs. Visit www.portalsanmiguel.com or www.sanmiguelguide.com to view dozens of them, along with private homes for rent.

Places to Eat

The rooftop terrace of **La Capilla** is glamorized by dramatic lighting on the stone walls rising on two sides.

La Capilla

Cuna de Allende 10
011-52-415-152-0698

The decor is as delicious as the food at **Tío Lucas**, where three-foot-tall iron statues of "*la calavera catrina*," José Guadalupe Posada's seductive skeleton in a broad Edwardian hat, look up at agave-shaped cane chandeliers ringed by monkeys and alligators.

Tío Lucas

Mesones 103
011-52-415-152-4996

For first-rate traditional Mexican food, go to **Olé-Olé** (Loreto 66; 011-52-415-152-0896), or take a short taxi ride out the Dolores road to **La Cruz del Perdón** (weekends only).

Things to Do

It's easy to get by in San Miguel without Spanish, but why would anyone want to in a town whose residents are so warm and courteous? Take a drop-in class or an intensive two-and-a-half-week course in "Power Verbs" at **Warren Hardy Spanish** (011-52-415-154-4017; www.warrenhardy.com), designed, in the words of the amiable Warren Hardy, "to get all your basic needs and wants met." His approach uses workbooks, flash cards, and student partnerships to facilitate learning in the over-forty mind.

Take a taxi or bus to **La Gruta** (011-52-415-185-2099), a mineral spa within walking distance of Atotonilco, with two thermal pools surrounded by greenery and an artificial grotto where you can stand under a waterfall for a powerful natural massage.

If you can tolerate crowds, join one of the **Biblioteca Pública's** Sunday house-and-garden tours. Some of the houses on the tour are also on the market; people under the spell of San Miguel may find a future home.

The revolution's plotters are said to have met there, either under the guise of a literary salon or behind the noise and diversion of dances and parties, depending on the source. One of the plotters was Father Miguel Hidalgo, the deservedly beloved parish priest of the nearby town of Dolores. As a known dancer, gambler, and father, he could have attended such functions without remark.

My friend and I took a bus to Dolores to see the church where, on the morning of September 16, 1810, Hidalgo called for freedom in what is known as the *grito de Dolores*, issued to rally the core of his army. He and Allende had been meeting in the town the night before when Juan Aldama, another *criollo* son of San Miguel, rode in to warn them that their intention to rise up the following December had been discovered. They risked imminent arrest, which forced an acceleration of their plans. (Our walking-tour guide in San Miguel, a retired U.S. structural engineer, retailed the most romantic version of that night's events, in which a local magistrate's wife, known to admire the dashing Allende, was locked up by her husband to prevent her from leaking word of the discovery. She cajoled the guard outside her door into carrying a note, and thus sent Aldama off on his ride.)

Inside Hidalgo's church we became absorbed in watching workmen painstakingly apply gold leaf to the pulpit. The altar gleamed with the results of their recent efforts; pink stone columns soared to a high celadon balcony; the ceiling was painted with delicate vines. These boudoir colors seemed anomalous in Mexico's "Cradle of Independence"—particularly alongside the Museo de la Independencia Nacional, half a block away, where graphic images of Spanish oppression, lavish with blood, depict faces darkened by cruelty or agony.

On our way to visit Hidalgo's house, we stopped at a corner of the central plaza for ice cream. Forewarned that a number of bizarre flavors—shrimp, mole, avocado—would be on offer, we were trying to puzzle out the listings of two rival vendors when a young woman named Claudia stepped up to help. She had spent some time as an au pair on Long Island, and saw us as a chance to use her English.

After no more than ten minutes' conversation—during which she saved me from choosing what I thought was cinnamon but was actually pork crackling—Claudia kissed us both on parting.

That September morning in 1810, commemorated today as the Día de la Independencia, Hidalgo invited the prisoners in Dolores's jail (now the *museo*) to join his army, replaced them with the town's Spaniards, and set off with his forces for San Miguel. On the way they stopped at the sanctuary of Atotonilco and took up the banner of the Virgin of Guadalupe, whose dark skin endeared her to the Indians and mestizos of Hidalgo's flock.

Atotonilco was constructed in the 1740s as a moral corrective to the hedonistic behavior of Indians at the several mineral springs nearby. Its builder, Father Luis Alfaro, a priest apparently drawn to suffering since childhood, succeeded in creating a destination for pilgrims and penitents across Mexico and through the centuries. On the day we visited, a weeklong penitential retreat was about to begin. The dusty road flanking the sanctuary was thick with stalls where merchants sold brightly colored knouts, crowns of thorns, rosaries, and the tiny metal votives called *milagros*. Happily, the knouts looked too flimsy to inflict much damage, and the thorns projected outward only. Furthermore, the pleasure grounds that the scandalized Alfaro meant to stamp out also continue to thrive. Lolling in a warm pool at one of the springs several days later, I wondered what dim view he might manage to take of the multigenerational families who were innocently splashing and chatting their way through the afternoon.

When the rebels reached San Miguel, Allende had the Spanish loyalists there locked up in a college with their portable wealth and persuaded the government regiment to stay in its quarters, thus protecting his social set from a bloody confrontation. (By then he may have realized that his vision of a reordered aristocracy was ill-matched with Hidalgo's goal of liberating the lower classes.) The Spaniards in the city of Guanajuato, about fifty miles west of San Miguel, were not so lucky. They and their gold had taken

refuge in a granary, where they were massacred by the army of the revolt. A few other rebel victories followed, but by the middle of 1811 Hidalgo and Allende had been chased north, captured, and executed. Their heads hung in cages on the Guanajuato granary for ten years, until one of the last of the rebel leaders, Vicente Guerrero, brokered a peace with the royalist commander Agustín Iturbide, and Mexico's independence was won.

In those days San Miguel was a prosperous way station on the silver route between Zacatecas and Mexico City. Now its itinerants are students at the several art and language schools, and tourists who don't always go home. Time and again I heard stories of people who came for a week and stayed for a month, or came for a month and stayed for three, or started looking for real estate within days of their arrival. The city's even-tempered climate year round, its relatively low cost of living, and the indolent beauty of its winding cobblestone streets and fragrant courtyards are largely to blame. But to my surprise I concluded that the expats themselves are a draw. Those I met were friendly, expansive, civic-minded, and culture-oriented. Some are also philanthropic: the walking tours benefit an agency that provides medical and dental care to needy children; the library's enormously popular house tours fund language, literacy, and art programs for Mexican youth. On a guided tour of El Charco del Ingenio, a botanical garden and nature preserve high in San Miguel's northeastern corner, I wondered if the dedicated assistant director who led us was hoping that in that large group of gringos lurked the seeds of a Friends of the Botanical Garden.

I had arrived in San Miguel at night, after a ninety-minute taxi ride through virtually unbroken blackness. The morning I left, the sere brown countryside looked like a vast moat surrounding a storybook city. I'd like to return some September, at the end of the rainy season, when the moat turns green, the hills are covered with wildflowers, and fireworks explode over the *jardín* in celebration of independence day. ■

Martha Spaulding is a former deputy managing editor of The Atlantic.

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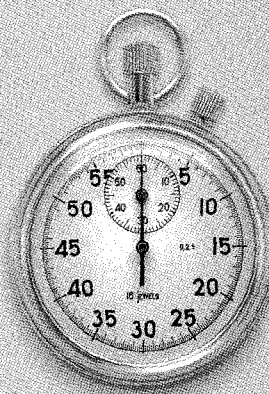


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FOOD

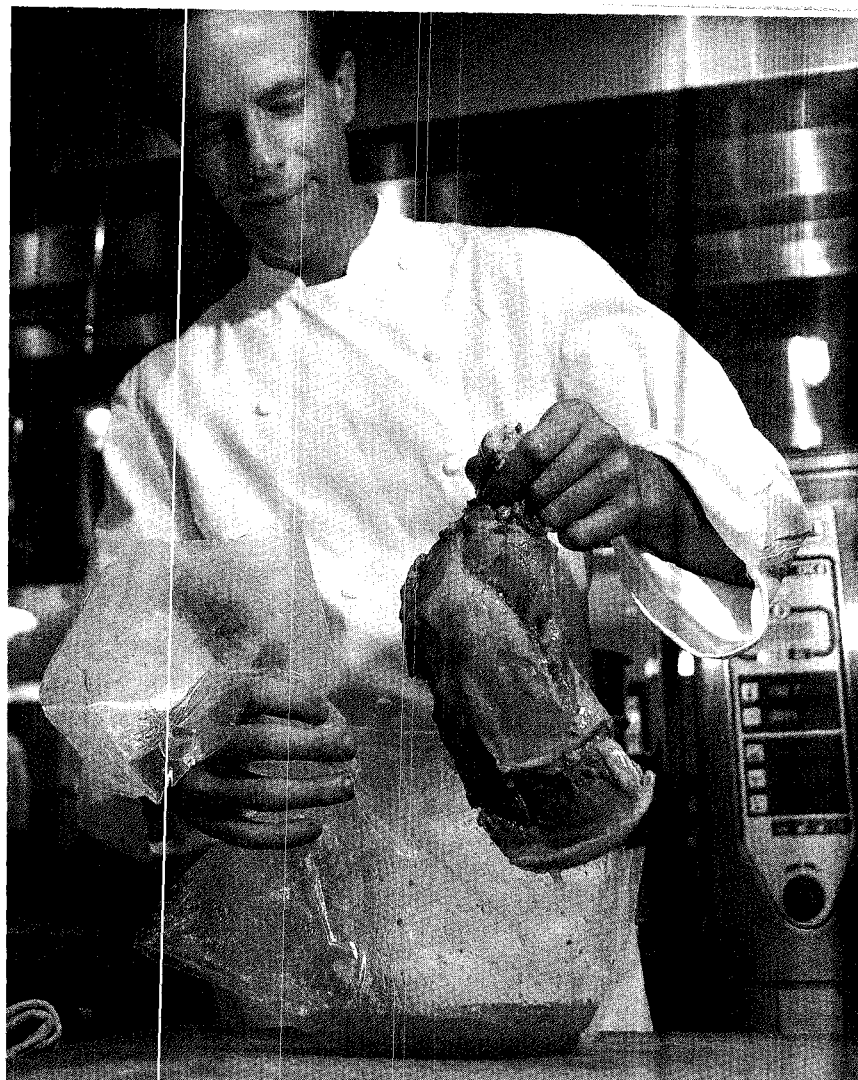
Out of the Frying Pan

Dinner cooked in plastic bags may sound more like airplane food than haute cuisine—but today, thanks to a cutting-edge culinary technique, it's both

BY CORBY KUMMER

S*ous vide*, now the rage among many ambitious chefs, is not for every cook. The term is French for “under vacuum”; it sounds much nicer than “vacuum packed” and more euphonious than “boil-in bag” or “Cryovac”—the food-grade plastic that has become a generic label for both the process and the bags in which food is vacuum sealed, cooked, chilled, and reheated. Everything that “Cryovac” implies turns many cooks completely off *sous vide*. A thick plastic barrier comes between you and the food you’re cooking. It looks ugly, like something from a cut-rate supermarket bin or, worse, a laboratory refrigerator. You can’t touch, smell, or stir what you’re cooking. When a piece of meat or chicken—which is what many chefs primarily use the *sous vide* method to cook—comes out of the bag, it looks like a rubber item from a joke shop.

For decades frozen-food manufacturers, airline meal services, and caterers have put entire meals in bags. So have harried homemakers, using vacuum-sealing machines like the ones advertised on late-night TV shows. Their motives are similar: extended storage that saves time and space, and good flavor results. High-end restaurants have long bought fancy entrée components in vacuum pouches, which allow chefs to offer a range of dishes their own kitchens are incapable of producing (meals just as good as first-class airplane food, in a restaurant!). In recent years cooking techniques and technology have been considerably refined (Cuisine Solutions, in Alexandria, Virginia, is the national leader), and today much first-class airline food is in fact prepared in vacuum-packed bags. Hotels and banquet halls rely on them. In France *sous vide* is a part of everyday life for discriminating shoppers, who buy haute cuisine



Dan Barber unbags a lamb shoulder that has been cooked for more than fifteen hours via the *sous vide* method at his restaurant in Tarrytown, New York.

meals from gleaming white-tiled frozen-food markets, and don’t hesitate to serve them at elegant parties.

In this country *sous vide*’s reputation is much more downmarket. And yet some chefs are true believers—such complete converts that practically every piece of protein in their restaurants gets packed in plastic and cooked for hours and hours in a tepid bath. These cooks trade poking and prodding, sniffing and tasting—the instincts they have acquired through years of watchful attention—for expensive packing machines, “immersion circulators” (heating tanks) and temperature probes. Their kitchens look like biology labs, with odorless open tanks quietly burbling beside uncrowded burners and griddles.

The great surprise is that some of the chefs who have wholeheartedly embraced *sous vide* are the ones you (or certainly I) would least expect: cooks who care deeply about the farm-to-table

connection, who would almost rather be tending sheep, feeding chickens, or using homemade compost in a bed of Charentais melons than standing at the stove. The country’s two highest-profile exponents of the farm-to-table connection, Alice Waters, of Chez Panisse, in Berkeley, and Dan Barber, of Blue Hill, in New York City, are at different ends of the *sous vide* spectrum: Waters wants nothing to do with it, and Barber can’t imagine running his kitchen happily without it.

Or, rather, his kitchens: there is a much larger Blue Hill in Tarrytown, forty-five minutes north of the city in Westchester County. The meadows around Barber’s second restaurant actually are Rockefeller land: both the restaurant and Stone Barns, a sustainable-agriculture education center and working farm, are housed in the beautifully and sensitively renovated former dairy barns of the Rockefeller estate. I recently visited Barber in Tarrytown to learn about his fierce attachment to

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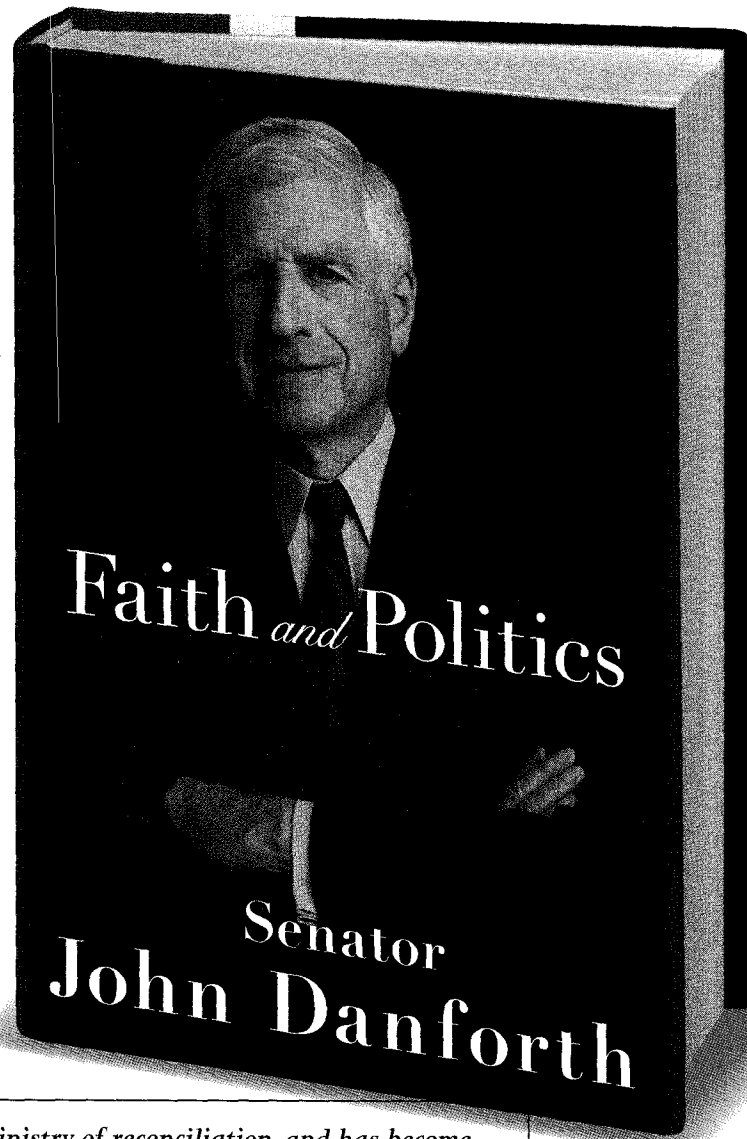
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VIKING

WHERE SOUS VIDE IS (SOMETIMES HIDDEN) ON THE MENU

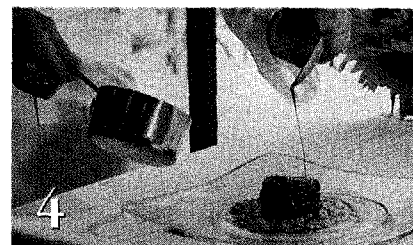
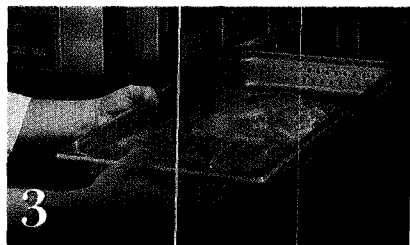
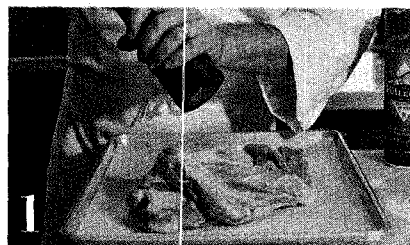
Blue Hill, 75 Washington Place, New York City, 212-539-1776, and **Blue Hill at Stone Barns**, 630 Bedford Road, Pocantico Hills, New York, 914-366-9600, www.bluehillnyc.com. Pretty much every piece of meat and poultry you will be served at these two restaurants, which are named for chef Dan Barber's family farm in the Berkshires, will have been raised on pasture and cooked by *sous vide*, the way Barber thinks best shows off pastured meat.

The French Laundry, 6640 Washington Street, Yountville, California, 707-944-2380, and **Per Se**, 10 Columbus Circle, New York City, 212-823-9335, www.frenchlaundry.com. Chef Thomas Keller views *sous vide* as an adjunct to more standard cooking methods, useful for certain vegetables and long-cooked cuts of meat like brisket. He is enough of an enthusiast that he plans to write a cookbook on the use of *sous vide* at home.

The Tasting Room, 264 Elizabeth Street, New York City, 212-358-7831. Although chef Colin Alevras had such a low budget that he had to buy his first *sous vide* equipment at deep Web discounts, he thinks it's essential for getting the best flavor from the produce he buys directly from farmers and at farmers' markets.

sous vide—and how he coped last spring with the threat that it might be severed, when inspectors from the New York City health department came to call.

Barber can actually watch sheep being tended, chickens being fed, and exceptional, even beautiful compost being spread at Stone Barns, which has four acres of vegetables, a stunning 22,000-square-foot greenhouse, and rare breeds of sheep, cows, and chickens chosen for their quality as food. (Much of the farm's production is sold: Martha Stewart, a neighbor, is an enthusiastic compost customer.) During my late-summer visit Barber showed me lambs in a paddock that were feasting on the greenest grass of the season—"the ice cream," he calls it. With grass so plentiful and rich, he told me, animals can produce meat almost as marbled as that of animals finished in feedlots on grain.



Sous vide in four steps, as demonstrated at the Blue Hill at Stone Barns restaurant

The very variety, by season and meadow, of grass-fed meat—the small but important flavor differences that Blue Hill and all other restaurants that care about local and seasonal produce celebrate—is what makes the use of *sous vide* mandatory, Barber told me. Many chefs insist on the guaranteed consistency of a grain finish, because they can't take chances with, and charge high prices for, grass-fed meat. "With grass you're all over the place," he said. "I could braise a shoulder of lamb perfectly, but it'll seem dry and stringy if the pasture and open space weren't perfect. Even if we're managing the land perfectly and saving a rare breed, it'll taste like crap."

As the market for grass-fed meat grows, big meat producers want a piece of it. The USDA has proposed a standard for "grass-fed" that would allow animals finished on huge feedlots rather than open meadows and who eat more than just grass to be labeled grass-fed. Allowing animals to graze in the open air preserves the health of land and livestock alike.

Sous vide "levels the playing field," Barber told me, by making grass-fed meat as tender and juicy as grain-finished meat all year round, instead of just during the six or so late-summer weeks when the two can go head to head. It makes even the most challenging cuts palatable and presents pure and focused flavors besides, a way to sell hesitant diners on the less prestigious cuts that are usually relegated to sausage and pâté, and burgers.

Barber uses *sous vide* for practically every piece of meat and poultry he cooks at his restaurants. Yes, he said, he was "skeptical" when he first experimented ("The aromas—they're all trapped!"), and yes, it seems "anathema" to his beliefs. But he was overwhelmed by the results. He gives as an example pork belly, a cut now fashionable among cooks for its flavor and nearly 100 percent fat content. "I thought what I did [with it] was the best in the world," he said. "I'd cure a little bit, braise it slowly in rich stock, let it rest, and get an unctuous, beautiful piece of meat." He paused for half a second. "*Sous vide* blows that away."

I asked Barber if he could tell whether another restaurant's "braised" pork belly, the term he still uses on his menu, was braised the way his was—how, in fact, could he tell if something in another restaurant had been cooked using *sous vide*? A beatific smile crossed his face. "If it tastes better than I could make it," he said.

A chef's version of heat-and-serve is very different from a food manufacturer's or a home cook's. The aim is less convenience and easy storage than flavor and guaranteed results. Celebrity chefs who run multiple restaurants can tinker with cooking times and temperatures—chefs generally go for as low and long as possible, to get the most satiny texture—and instruct their staffs in different cities exactly how to cook foie gras or chicken breast or veal chops. (Foie gras was among the first foods to

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which haute-cuisine cooks applied *sous vide*, to save money by reducing shrinkage and to keep texture from crossing into chopped-liver graininess.) *Sous vide* is also very useful for seasoning or marinating meat—the process transfers flavor so efficiently that even artisan-bacon producers, for example, brine and flavor their pork bellies in a vacuum. And chefs like the fact that vegetables and fruits like artichokes, endive, and apples that oxidize easily, turning an unpleasant brown, will stay unblemished in a *sous vide* bag.

Once the formula is down, about the only variable is how the line cook handles the reheating, which often involves a quick searing to darken chicken skin or make a steak look grilled, and then careful saucing and plating. This last step—heating and plating—is important for a chef's self-defense. Only the piece of meat or chicken or, say, a vegetable accompaniment has been cooked in a pouch; the rest of the dish has been cooked with all the technique and just-for-you care a diner could demand. And there is some skill involved in the final searing for color, because a minute or two too long can wreck the delicate textures that so dazzle chefs.

Thomas Keller, the chef at the French Laundry, in Napa Valley, says that *sous vide* is not a minging time- and labor-saver; it's a tool that gives chefs another worthy kitchen tool. Jonathan Benno, the chef at Per Se, Keller's New York outpost, says that even if a brisket cooks for two days, and short ribs for even longer, once someone orders the meat "we'll glaze it in stock and serve it with roasted potatoes, sautéed mushrooms, and a really rich bordelaise sauce." (Portions are famously small at both restaurants, to leave diners eager for more, but the number of courses extends well into the double digits, and "really rich" is a safe description for pretty much every one of them.) The two chefs are thinking of writing another in Keller's successful string of cookbooks, this one on *sous vide* in the home kitchen. The equipment would be less ambitious—a Seal-a-Meal equivalent, plus a controlled temperature heater—and the dishes would be entire stews and entrées, not just marinated meats.

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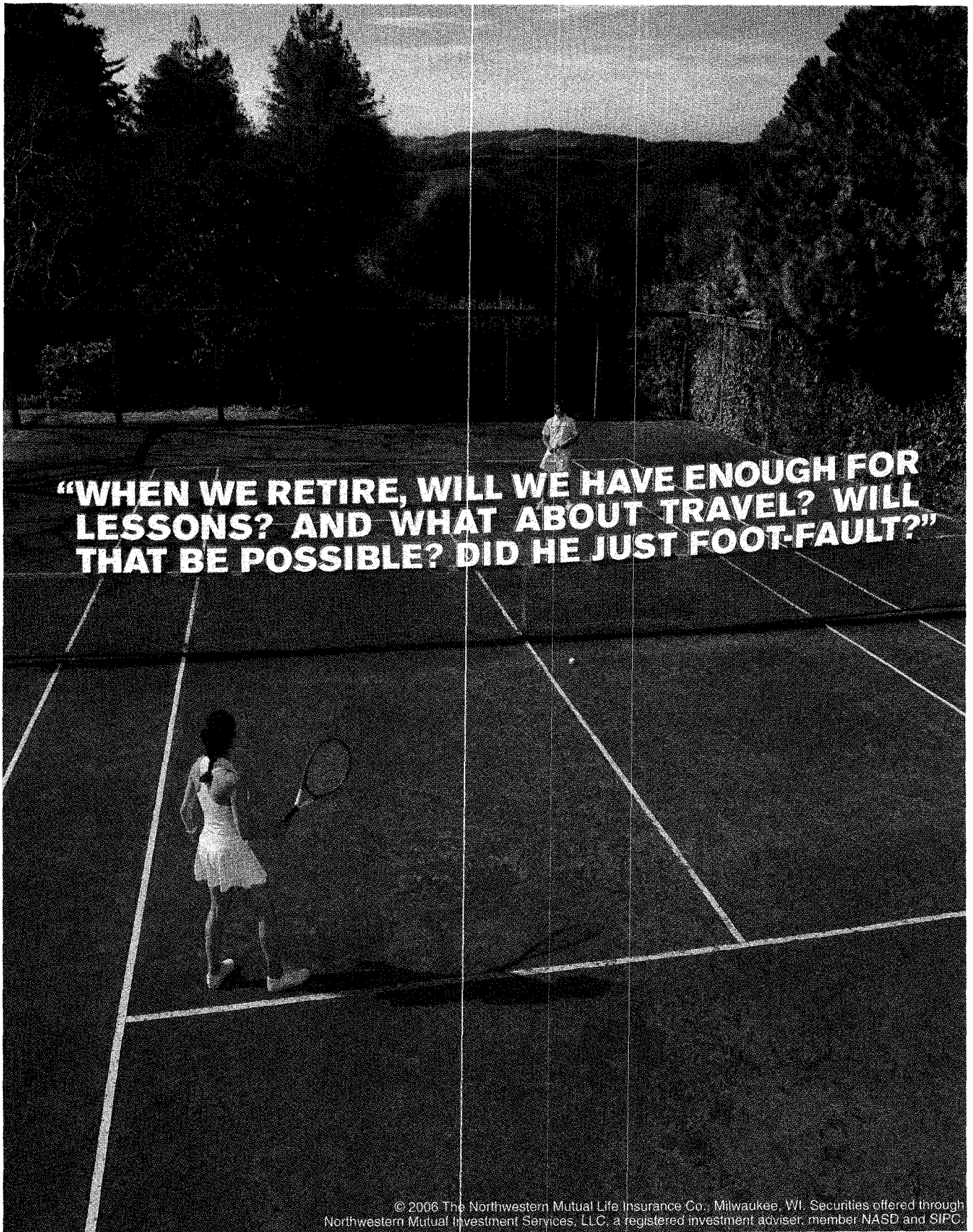
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Dan Barber's enthusiastic endorsement of the technique in a long article by Amanda Hesser in *The New York Times Magazine* drew the attention of the city's health department, which realized that it had no licensing requirements for *sous vide*'s use. The dangers can be great: bacteria that can lead to botulism and listeriosis can grow in anaerobic environments like vacuum-sealed bags and cans, but in bags there is no visual trace—no dented can—or telltale rotting or putrid smell. (The federal Food and Drug Administration does have guidelines for the safe use of vacuum packing in food.) After the department visited several restaurants whose chefs were known to use *sous vide*, word spread among panicked chefs that it was banning the technique. A spokesperson from the New York health department says there is no outright ban; chefs who want to use *sous vide* must have an approved Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan.

Barber was determined. Working with the health department, he developed an HACCP plan, and in July his restaurant became the first to be licensed for *sous vide*. Jonathan Benno developed his own plan and won the second license in August. Storing any raw ingredients in vacuum bags for longer than twelve hours is prohibited, and all food cooked in bags must be served within seventy-two hours.

Neither restaurant is yet licensed to use *sous vide* for cooking fish (Per Se is trying), because fish is more susceptible to anaerobic bacteria than meat. This fact discourages Colin Alevras, of the Tasting Room, in New York City, another friend to local farmers and *sous vide*. After health department officials came to his kitchen, he told me, they didn't believe him when he said that he always vacuum packed his raw fish right before cooking it, simply because he thinks it tastes better that way. Indeed, to most people—me, for instance—thinking about the equipment required, throwing a fish fillet into a hot pan does seem much easier, and maybe better, too.

After a long evening tasting many kinds of *sous vide* meat and poultry at Blue Hill in Tarrytown, I was looking longingly at the stoves and the grill. Getting

over the issues of color and texture takes time. It's hard to convince yourself that a piece of blancmange-white chicken breast that looks positively wet in the middle is cooked through. When I asked Barber how he could be sure it was, he produced a fancy thermometer with needle probes, and told me that the cooks at his restaurants stick a probe through a sample bag in every batch of food before removing it from the immersion bath or steam oven.

I was much more drawn to food that had been seared or crisped or otherwise colored a safe-looking brown. I completely understood the appeal of a piece of chicken thigh, its little square of crispy skin reassuringly attached, whose creamy texture and full flavor would be hard or impossible to obtain by any other cooking method. The rich and tender chicken wings were a revelation. The lamb neck, a muscular, tough cut, had been appetizingly browned, and the texture was perfect. The pork ear was marvelous—not at all chewy—and the pork cheek was like brisket. To make these notoriously difficult cuts so appealing is indeed a technical triumph.

But with most familiar cuts I missed the variability in the mouth that I expect, and enjoy, in a piece of meat. Chefs told me that they could abandon the mandatory overcooking on the outside to get one small "bull's-eye" in the middle; everything in the bag was a bull's-eye. Yes, tenderness is assured. But that's not always what I want. I realized that night why I was so taken aback by the perfectly brick-shaped pieces of short rib I had recently been served at an ambitious new Boston restaurant: not only was the shape suspiciously neat, but the texture was oddly soft and homogenous. I like some chew, and not quite knowing what the next bite will bring.

I left Blue Hill, then, a partial convert, and as always delighted and instructed by the famously intellectual Barber's intense thoughtfulness. But I sympathized with an apprentice cook who sought me out, having recognized me from evenings I'd spent at Chez Panisse when he worked there. "I see why they do it," he said, pointing to the immersion circulators by the stoves. "But I can't help feeling it's ... impersonal." ▀

Corby Kummer is a senior editor of The Atlantic.

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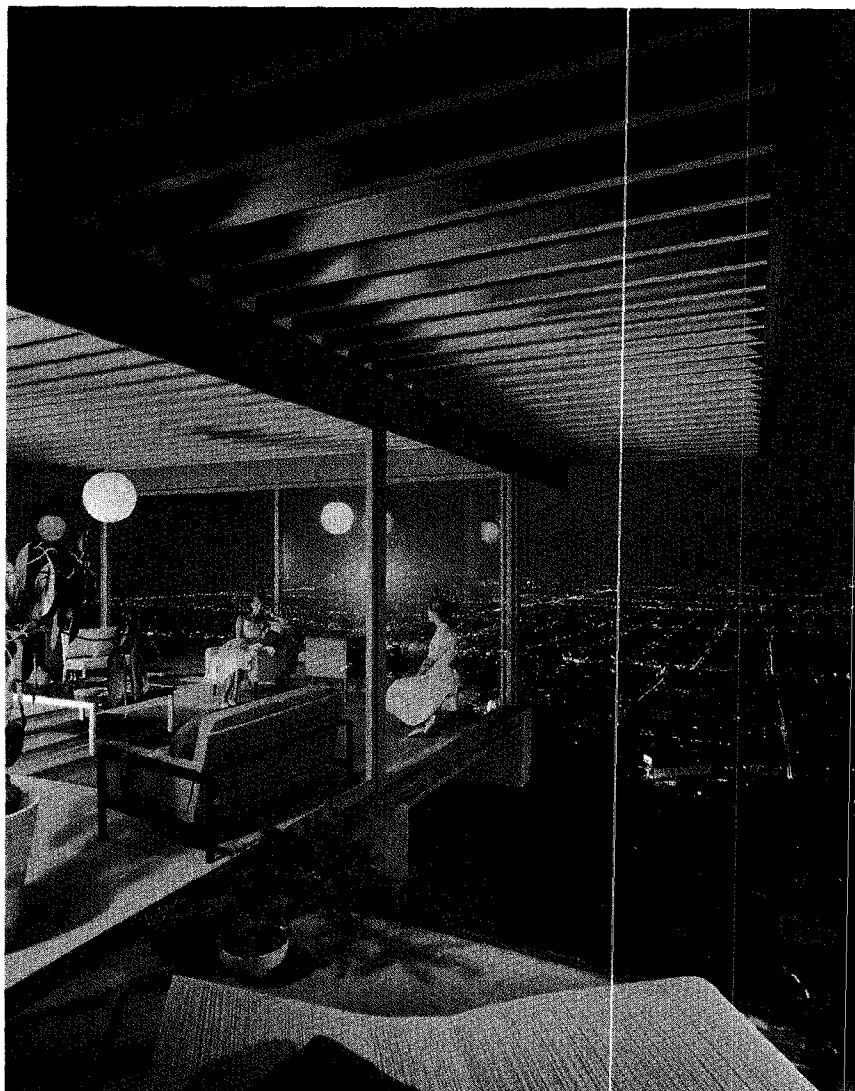


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Julius Shulman's 1960 photograph of Case Study House No. 22

COMMERCE AND CULTURE

The Iconographer

In Julius Shulman's photographs, modern architecture became seductive, comfortable, and immortal

BY VIRGINIA POSTREL

In the fall of 1919, a young Austrian architect dreamed of escape—escape from the frigid European winter, from the “psychological collapse” of a demoralized culture, from the “empty cheerless drafting” that consumed his workdays. “I wish I could get out of Europe,” he wrote in his diary, “and get to an idyllic tropical island where one does not have to fear the winter, where one does not have to slave but finds time to think, or even more important, can have a free spirit.” A travel poster in Zurich obsessed him: CALIFORNIA CALLS YOU, it read.

The advertising worked. In February 1925, Richard Neutra and his family settled in Los Angeles. “I found what I had hoped for,” he wrote, “a people who were more ‘mentally footloose’ than those elsewhere, who did not mind deviating opinions ... [a place] where one can do almost anything that comes to mind and is good fun.”

Good fun, indeed. In the golden sunlight and quirk-tolerant culture of southern California, modernism’s glass walls and white boxes lost their sternness. Instead of a visual lecture on Machine

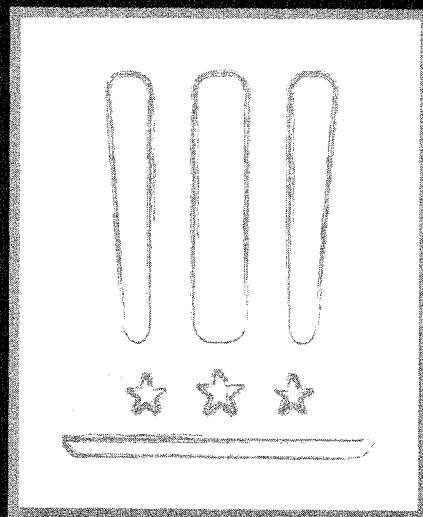
Age precision or the evils of ornamentation, the modern architecture—above all, its home design—became the setting for a new kind of life or, as we’ve come to call it, *lifestyle*: comfortable and convivial, a place where outdoors and indoors, leisure and ambition, nature and artifice, mind and body can happily coexist.

To the mission architecture of the old travel posters, Neutra and other California modernists added new symbols of the good life, or at least their raw materials: the walls of glass, inviting patios, flat roofs, and sliding doors appropriate for free spirits in a kind climate. To turn those buildings into icons, however, someone had to transform steel and stone into reproducible images, emotionally resonant and frozen in time. That person was the photographer Julius Shulman, who met Neutra in 1936. One of Neutra’s apprentices was boarding with Shulman’s sister, and he took young Julius along on a visit to the nearly complete Kun House. Just for fun, Shulman, then an aimless student who’d been auditing courses at Berkeley and UCLA for seven years, shot photos of the unusual house, using his pocket camera and a tripod. When Neutra saw the snapshots, he recognized the young man’s special talent: an ability to capture the aesthetic and emotional intention of designs. For the next thirty-four years, until Neutra’s death in 1970, the two collaborated. Through his work with Neutra, Shulman met other California modernists, including Rudolf Schindler, Raphael Soriano, Charles and Ray Eames, Albert Frey, John Lautner, and Gregory Ain. The architects built the buildings, but Shulman created the evocative images through which we know them.

His 1947 twilight shot of Neutra’s Kaufmann House, in Palm Springs, with Mrs. Kaufmann reclining by the pool and the bright house sharply delineated against the misty desert hills, has come to represent Palm Springs, mid-century modernism, and Neutra himself. Even more resonant is Shulman’s 1960 photograph of Pierre Koenig’s Case Study House No. 22, another twilight scene. Here two young ladies converse in a

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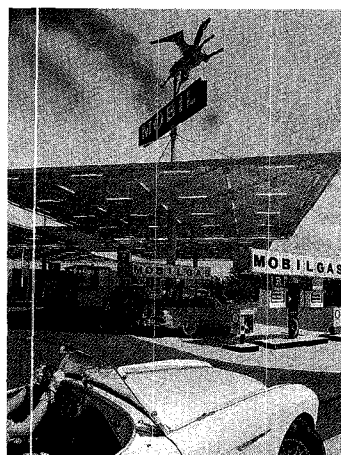
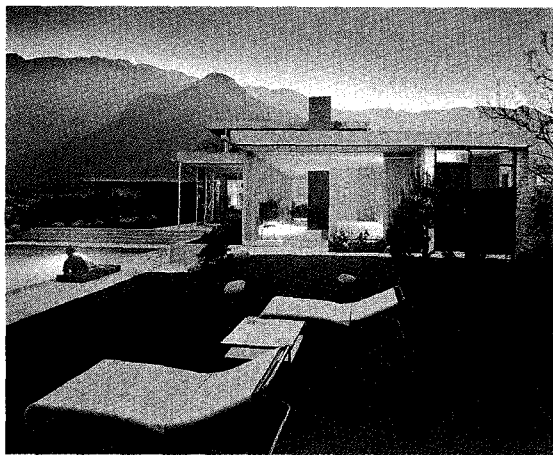
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Kaufmann House, Palm Springs, 1947; Mobil Gas Station, Anaheim, circa 1956; Academy Theatre, Inglewood, 1940

glass-enclosed living room that juts out toward the sprawling city grid of tiny lights. The architecture critic Paul Goldberger called the photograph “one of those singular images that sums up an entire city at a moment in time.” Less obviously glamorous but equally inviting is the 1946 photo of Gordon Drake’s tiny, ingeniously designed home. Shooting from seated eye level across the living room, Shulman draws the viewer through the open glass door to the patio, where three young friends read and converse in an intimate space protected by the hillside immediately behind them. “He has portrayed what it’s like to live in the modern house,” Shulman pronounced in an interview, suggesting how I should describe his work.

In fact, he has portrayed something more powerful: an *ideal* of what it’s like to live in a modern house. Shulman’s photographs are not simply beautiful objects in themselves or re-creations of striking buildings; they are psychologically compelling images that invite viewers to project themselves into the scene. An architectural photograph can conjure three possible desires: “I want that photograph,” “I want that building,” or “I want that life.” Shulman’s best work evokes all three. At a time when the public thought of modernism as a cold, impersonal style suited only for office buildings, he made its houses look seductively human. His photos do not merely record modern architecture, California style; they sell it. “You make people want to say, ‘Gosh, I could lie down on that couch and take a nap.’ Or, ‘I’d love to sit at that table and have dinner there. Or entertain company

around the fireplace,’” he recently told an audience at the National Building Museum, in Washington, D.C.

Shulman was discussing an eighty-three-piece retrospective of his work, “Julius Shulman, Modernity and the Metropolis.” Organized by the Getty Research Institute, which in January 2004 bought his enormous archive, the exhibition opened first in Los Angeles on October 11, 2005, the day after the photographer’s ninety-fifth birthday. (It is at the Art Institute of Chicago through December 3.) More than a survey of a great photographer’s work, or of the architecture he documented, the exhibition is a glamorous composite portrait of the city that defined twentieth-century urban form. As modernity’s metropolis, Los Angeles looks nothing like Fritz Lang’s futuristic vision. Here are low-rise office buildings and backyard patios, car dealerships and gas stations, pool-side chaises and sliding glass doors—a horizontal metropolis of private space. Here even Ayn Rand, whose *Fountainhead* celebrated skyscrapers as “the shapes of man’s achievement on earth,” socializes within the curving aluminum wall of her Neutra-designed patio.

Modernity, it turns out, built a metropolis with a form so unprecedented that residents and critics still refuse to consider it a real city; it’s a suburb without a core—which is to say, not a suburb at all—and, in the United States, increasingly a place where one does not have to fear the winter. The suburb is not, as Frank Lloyd Wright and others imagined, a place to escape the city; it *is* the city, the place where, as Neutra hazily imagined,

country and city merge, where you can get “fresh air here, speakeasies and museum treasures there.” By the end of the twentieth century, more than half of all Americans were living in metropolitan areas of more than a million people—“metropolitan areas,” not city limits—of which Shulman’s southern California is by some definitions the most densely populated. Hence the traffic congestion.

Good architecture, Shulman believes, still promises a better life. He showed me his pictures of the Encino home that the architect Raquel Vert designed for herself in the mid-1990s. Shulman took the street-front photograph when the shadows from the foliage were at their thickest, to create “an effect of privacy and isolation.” Unlike its mid-century predecessors, Vert’s house is not isolated at all; it’s right up against the street, in a tract dense with houses. Her design creates privacy in part by recessing the front door behind a concrete wall. Immediately inside are stairs leading to her office—not downtown in a skyscraper, but upstairs in her home. Just as it mingled indoors and out, California modernism anticipated the reunion of home and work. Ayn Rand, before she decamped to the Empire State Building, wrote in a home office with a wall of glass accordion doors opening to the outside. Since 1950, Shulman has worked in a studio attached to the home designed for him by Soriano. With no commute, he still maintains an active work schedule. He is, he says, “always happy.”

And he is a perfect representative of the drive that shaped Los Angeles in the

twentieth century and continues to give rise to new urban dreams. Los Angeles, like New York, was and is a "city of ambition," the title of Alfred Stieglitz's 1910 photo of a New York waterfront of towers and steam. But ambition takes a different form in California. West Coast ambition is not the upward thrust of a skyscraper, the drive to be the tallest in a small and crowded space. Californians like fame and money as much as anyone, of course. But (Hollywood agents aside) their dearest ambitions, like their architecture, are more horizontal, with room for everyone to erect an individual marker. This ambition may be less cutthroat, but it is, in its very openness, more universally demanding. Opting out of the quest for status or money is easy, even virtuous, compared with saying you don't care whether your life leaves a mark. The things outsiders find absurd or threatening about California—the self-fashioned spiritual practices, the body-builder/action-star governor, the crazy diets, the junk bonds, the endless supply of new fictions, the UCLA- and Palo Alto-born Internet—do share a certain grandiosity, a ridiculous desire to change the world, or at least oneself. Better not to admit such ambitions, or so goes the fable easterners love to repeat: the story of the disillusioned California dreamer.

Storytelling, like photography, is a matter of selection and framing. The photographer Edward Weston "fell in love with stunning cracks in buckly plaster," Neutra complained. "His wonderful photos could have served as evidence in court against a plastering contractor." Understandably, the architect preferred Shulman's idealized portraits. Both kinds of photographs were selective, yet also true. Shulman's life and work remind us that some people do change the world, or at least their little piece of it. The photographer has not only crafted an oeuvre of more than a quarter-million prints, negatives, and transparencies. He has transformed the hillside behind his own modern home from bare dirt into a semitropical woods. "I've got a jungle," he said proudly. "I made this myself." ▮

Virginia Postrel is a contributing editor of The Atlantic and the author of The Substance of Style and The Future and Its Enemies. Her blog, the Dynamist, can be found at www.dynamist.com/weblog.

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TECHNOLOGY

Making Haystacks, Finding Needles

New programs let you easily categorize anything you come across on the Web or in your own files—and, more important, let you find it all again

BY JAMES FALLOWS

It's time for another look at one of the software world's longest-running and potentially most important sagas: the attempt to create effective data-management programs.

Computer users are always coming across little bits of information—from e-mails, from conversations, and from blogs, RSS feeds, and other Web sites. Often we'd like to *do* something with this information, rather than letting it whiz by into oblivion. As the systems that present information have evolved, so have the means for storing and keeping track of data we might like to use later on. Starting twenty-five years ago, when almost the only data that flowed into a computer came via early e-mail

or bulletin-board systems, I've tried about 200 different data-management programs, including two I mentioned several months ago in this space. These are Microsoft's OneNote, which looks sleeker and more Mac-like than other Microsoft Office applications and, while predictably well integrated with Microsoft's Outlook and Word, also works very well with non-Microsoft products like the Firefox Web browser; and Chandler, from Mitch Kapor's Open Source Applications Foundation, a still-emerging effort to create a free, all-platform information manager.

Good data managers do three things. They let you bring information into the program easily, from textual sources like

e-mail or from Web sites. They let you classify, or "tag," incoming information, if you already know what you'd like to do with it: for example, you might want to save a certain Web clip for information about next summer's vacation or for a work project you have under way. Other information you might want to dump into a general storage bin without a specific purpose but on the chance you might want to look at it again. And the programs let you later retrieve the information you've stored, whether you've classified it or not, by means ranging from simple keyword searches to elaborate ways of detecting relationships among data.

All the programs I'll mention meet three crucial tests. They allow effortless data collection, tagged and untagged storage, and flexible retrieval options. They differ in where they've placed their emphasis, and in whether they're aimed at users who like structure and outlines or those who prefer looser organizational schemes. Compared with OneNote and even Chandler, they are generally less ambitious in their aims and come from smaller (and sometimes shakier) enterprises. In wine terms, these are mainly *garagiste* offerings rather than from the main châteaux. But each excels in a certain way, and all are worth at least experimenting with, since they're available for free trial periods. Unless otherwise noted, each program can be found at a Web site of the same name or via a simple Web search. With a few exceptions, these programs are for PCs only. The two programs for Macs, though, are particularly elegant.

Although not necessarily the most powerful of these programs, EverNote will probably feel the most natural to most users. It's the one I recommend as a starting point for people first trying this kind of program. EverNote comes from a company in California, most of whose founders were computer experts in the old Soviet Union.

After you install EverNote, it places a stylized "E" logo on your browser's tool bar. If you click on the E while visiting a Web page, the whole contents of the page go into EverNote's storage, along with URL information so you can

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SEARCHES, BACKUPS, SOUL OF A NEW PROGRAM

Last month I mentioned several search engines that “cluster” or classify the pages they have found, rather than presenting a plain Google- or Yahoo-style list of results. Another worth considering is **Kartoo**, which was created by two young developers in France. Like Grokker and some other clustering sites, Kartoo presents a visual map of pages related to your query, with conceptually similar sites bunched together and with links showing which bunch of results is related to which other bunch. **Ujiko**, another clustering engine from the same company, displays results with a different, dial-like map, and claims to be able to improve its search sophistication over time, as it observes which results you end up clicking on. Each is worth a look.

Mooter, from a company in Australia, produces sparer-looking but otherwise similar conceptual maps of search results. Indeed, its interface is so plain that it closely resembles Google’s original site, before home-page links were added for News, Video, Images, Maps, and Google’s other new features.

The month before that, I discussed the tedious but important obligation to make regular file backups, not simply to avoid being flummoxed by a hard-drive crash but also to preserve information that might be trapped in an outdated operating system. A new service called **Carbonite** automates this process by copying every file on your computer, or some subset of files that you select, into an encrypted online storage site. You specify what you’d like backed up, and the rest happens automatically. The service costs \$50 a year for an unlimited amount of data. It can take a week or more to do the full initial backup, but neither during that process nor afterward does Carbonite slow the computer’s other operations.

And one month before that, I described the effort to create a new program called Chandler. This month’s tech-literature pick, *Dreaming in Code*, by Scott Rosenberg, is the full chronicle of that effort. The book is the first true successor to Tracy Kidder’s *Soul of a New Machine*, and is written with a combination of technical sophistication and narrative skill not seen in many years. Read it to understand what all these software wizards actually do. —J.F.

visit the page again. You can also select text or images from the Web page and store those selections with a click of the E—or drag material to the E from Word or most other programs. The basic version, which can do all this, is free. An advanced version, for \$34.95, can import handwritten notes from tablet computers and, in many cases, convert them to searchable text.

The program’s most distinctive feature is its “Time Band,” which runs along the right edge of the screen. Each note is assigned a place on the band, based on the instant when it was created. The band serves as an endless reel on which all the notes are stored, from oldest to newest. The concept sounds trivial, but it is surprisingly interesting to use—it reminds you of the huge roll of paper on which Jack Kerouac supposedly wrote *On the Road*, so he wouldn’t be distracted when coming to the end of a page.

When looking for a note, you can jump to the time when it was created, or quickly scroll through the contents until you find a picture or layout that looks familiar; or, of course, you can also use familiar keyword-search tools. EverNote auto-categorizes notes according to types (Web clips, to-do items, pure text, pictures, and so on) and lets you manually assign categories of your own. You can also create “keyword categories”—every item with the word *Tahiti* will automatically go into the “Next Year’s Vacation” category—and do Boolean searches involving those categories. (For instance, all items that are assigned to the “Next Year’s Vacation” category but not assigned to the “Prohibitively Expensive” category.) Unlike OneNote, EverNote cannot store audio or video clips. It is also less convenient than OneNote as a way to type in new information (as opposed to clipping or capturing it). Still, many people will find that it does most of what they want.

Net Snippets, from a small company in Israel, is not as pretty as EverNote but is very quick and effective, especially for text-based research projects. After installation it displays a thumbnail-size box in one corner of the screen. You drag whatever you want to store over to that box, and the program saves it for later retrieval. The basic version is

free and easy to learn. More-advanced versions cost up to \$129.95 and include features for producing bibliographies or other academic reports based on the captured data.

A relatively new entry, Surfulator, created by a veteran developer in Australia, differs from most of the others in the elaborate ways it allows you to comment on, classify, and even edit the material you have collected. For instance, if you’ve copied and stored a blog entry or a passage from a Web site, you can enter notes of your own—“There he goes again!” “This detail is interesting”—right alongside the clip, and search for those comments later on. It also has a variety of special categorization tools. Surfulator costs \$35; its creator, Neville Franks, chronicles the program’s ongoing evolution at www.blog.surfulator.com.

Until this spring, Onfolio was a strong stand-alone competitor to the likes of EverNote and Net Snippets in allowing the simple capture and categorization of text and images. Its edge was the elegant way it handled RSS feeds, and its unique system for dealing with very long Web postings. Newspapers, magazines, and some other sites often break lengthy articles into a series of separate pages. When you get to the bottom of each page, you have to click “Next” to keep reading. On some sites you can get around this by clicking on a “Print-Friendly Version” button, which usually opens up a separate window with the article’s entire contents. Onfolio can spare you this process by itself amassing and storing material from a multipage site. Last March Microsoft acquired Onfolio and made the program part of its Windows Live Toolbar, which is free (from www.ideas.live.com) but runs only in Microsoft’s Internet Explorer (and Outlook), not in Firefox or any other browser.

Google has a free data manager called Google Notebook, which will run in most browsers. But it is bare-bones and far more limited than anything else mentioned here. Some of Google’s new utilities, like its Calendar and Spreadsheet programs, can do almost everything that a “real” desktop program like Outlook or Excel can. Google’s Notebook has not yet reached that level.

For more than twenty years, the AskSam company, of Perry, Florida, has offered very powerful "free-form database" programs. You enter e-mail, research notes, and other textual or numeric data into AskSam, and then you can retrieve it according to precise, structured queries. ("Show me all notes from June 2001 that belong to the following two categories and contain these three keywords.") These searches can sometimes reveal relationships that would not otherwise be obvious. The company's SurfSaver product is slightly more cumbersome than EverNote or Onfolio when it comes to storing information, but it is much more powerful in retrieval.

Every month or two since 2001, a small, multinational team of designers based in Beijing has issued successive releases of its Advanced Data Management program, or ADM. (I visited the team in Beijing recently and will have more to say about its work another time.) Like other programs mentioned here, ADM allows users to collect a variety of data in one place. It will be more attractive to those who (like me) naturally think, organize, and even create in the outline form familiar from term-paper days.

Now, the promised Mac programs. One is DevonThink, created in Germany, which was mentioned previously in these pages but can't be mentioned often enough. It is only so-so in collecting data, but it is superb at organizing and searching what you have amassed. It has an exceptional "semantic search" utility, which like a good Web search engine can often find what you're looking for even if that is not exactly what you typed in. (The only comparable PC program I'm aware of is dtSearch.) The other is Tinderbox, from Eastgate Systems, of Watertown, Massachusetts. Its Web-clipping utilities are primitive at best, but it is a wonderful tool for arranging ideas, seeing, and changing the relationships among them, and generally doing creative work.

Each user's taste will vary. Some PC users will want to move past EverNote, and some Mac users will find Tinderbox too tricky to be worthwhile. But those two programs are good places to start. ▀

James Fallows is a national correspondent of The Atlantic.

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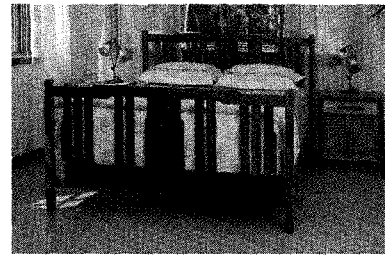
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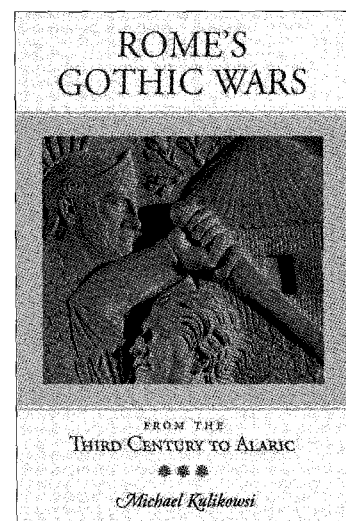
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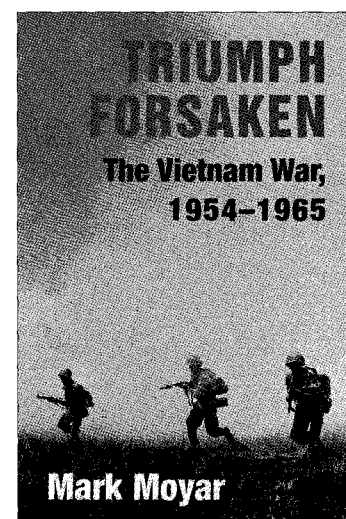


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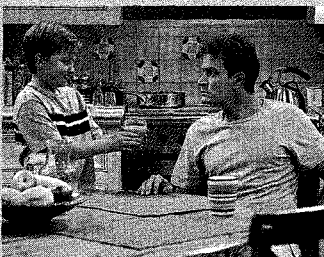
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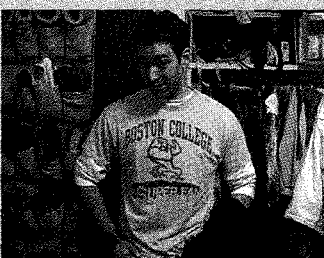
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CONTENT

Thank You, YouTube

DIY video is making merely professional television seem stodgy, slow, and hopelessly last century

BY MICHAEL HIRSCHORN

When Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz were bringing *I Love Lucy* to the airwaves in 1951, videotape didn't exist yet. The only way to create a permanent record of a televised moment was to use a technique called kinescoping, in which a movie camera recorded off a television monitor. Since the country had yet to be linked for live broadcast, viewers in the western half of the country generally had to make do with kinescoped copies of the live productions coming out of New York. Lucy and Desi wanted to make their show in Los Angeles, where they lived, but corporate sponsors insisted that New York audiences—then the country's largest advertising market—see higher-quality productions than kinescoping offered. The solution: have three movie cameras simultaneously record the performance on a stage in front of a studio audience, with a director stitching together the feeds into a cohesive whole. So was born the three-camera sitcom, television's most dominant and enduring format.

You don't have to be a futurehead to see that the sitcom era, and traditional television with it, is today being book-ended. Video is now startlingly easy to produce, edit, and distribute. If you've watched the Web-based video-sharing site YouTube grow over the past six to eight months from Web backwater to the world's largest video outlet, you've seen Americans embrace the idea of becoming television producers and even building their own mini-networks.

The effect of this rabbitry digital proliferation has not just been economic; it's also been aesthetic. Corporate television's recent concern about digital media has been whether choice would swamp quality. But digital video is doing more than just providing infinite alternatives; it's making network product seem visually slow and outdated. The quality of video produced for the Web (most of it less than a thousandth the cost of, say, an

episode of *Two and a Half Men*, the most popular three-camera sitcom still on television) is remarkably good, if you factor out suddenly superannuated television values like proper microphones, lighting, and steady camera work. *The BC*, a recent five-episode parody of Fox's *The OC* done for mere hundreds of dollars per episode, was built in and around the Boston College campus and featured hilarious cameos by a BC chaplain and other local celebrities. It's filled with deft jump cuts, sharp writing, and genuinely funny moments—and its creators now have the inevitable HBO development deal.

This summer, *lonelygirl15* grew into the biggest phenomenon of the early YouTube era by offering ... very little, actually. It was, simply (or apparently simply, because its huge audience invested it with a variety of talismanic meanings), a fifteen-year-old staring intently into the camera, delivering comic riffs on various subjects: her overbearing parents, who won't let her leave her room; a would-be boyfriend; and, gratifyingly, on Jared Diamond and Heisenberg. The clips, all two minutes or less, generated their own cottage industry of responses and parodies, as well as increasingly far-fetched efforts to tie her videos to the occultist Aleister Crowley or to an Alternate Reality Game; or, less far-fetched, to a brilliantly evil viral marketing campaign. In the end the conspiracy theorists proved right: Bree was a twenty-year-old acting a role in what two filmmakers hope will eventually become a full-length conventional movie. In retrospect, it was a thrilling hoax that was perfectly attuned to the cultural moment, playing in the interstices between authenticity and artifice, amateurism and professionalism. The tantalizing notion that she might in fact have actually been a "lonely girl" hung in the air: a digital-age Rapunzel waiting to be rescued by ... who, exactly?

FROM TOP: COURTESY LONELYGIRL15; 20TH CENTURY FOX/THE KOBAL COLLECTION; WARNER BROS. TV/CHUCK LORIE PROD./THE KOBAL COLLECTION; COURTESY THE BC; MTV.NET

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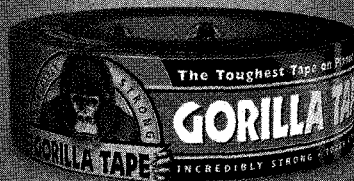
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The *lonelygirl15* series, shot on a \$150 Web camera, shows that digital video can be made by anyone, go anywhere, and pose as anything. And, clearly, audiences have made a new compact with creators: traditional notions of quality, they are signaling, no longer matter (the out-of-focus, off-kilter MySpace cell-phone snap being the portrait painting of the mid-aughts). In fact, this grittiness, lack of polish, and occasionally shocking intimacy constitute a new aesthetic of realness, much as the scratchiness, feedback, and ostentatious amateurishness of the Sex Pistols made everything else seem like mere affectation. Fear not, revanchists: Do-It-Yourself video will ultimately not mean the end of classic filmic values, just as the Pistols—and Public Enemy and

of punk video was most likely *The Blair Witch Project*, a pseudo-documentary horror movie that became the hipster smash of 1999. The conceit was that three student filmmakers disappear somewhere in the Maryland woods while making a documentary, never to be seen again. All we have left is the very tape you're watching, a coup-de-théâtre that at the time had some of the frisson of a snuff film: the tape just runs out. Once seen all the way through, the story is a bit of a nothingburger, but the whipsaw camera movements, lack of conventional dramatic beats, and off-kilter angles hit emotional notes that mainstream moviemaking couldn't touch. (Sharing this production approach—but little else—MTV's *Jackass* became the DIY-television breakthrough of 2000.)

What do two impossibly rich, young, and famous people do in their spare time? Answer: Have sex and talk about having sex. *Chaotic* was all about unexpected pleasures.

N.W.A and Nirvana after them—did not kill off bad heavy metal, overproduced bling-crazed hip-hop, and unctuous, keening pop rock. Drama, both on television and in film, appears better suited to survive the onslaught than comedy, mostly because narrative seems to be an eternal value. And it's even been argued that current dramas like *24*, *Lost*, and *Prison Break* (and pretty much everything on HBO) are so good *because* of the challenge from digital media: they are faster, more complex, and smarter than the shows we grew up on.

DIY video is, in fact, not an overnight phenomenon. One could draw a line from *lonelygirl15* as far back as *Grey Gardens*, the brutally deadpan 1975 Maysles brothers documentary about the batty housebound "Big Edie" Beale and her daughter, the unwittingly fabulous "Little Edie" (aunt and first cousin, respectively, of Jackie O). But it's indisputable that the advent of low-cost digital video, and its almost-no-cost distribution, make this more than a passing moment. The breakthrough expression

Britney and Kevin: *Chaotic*, the short-lived 2005 reality series on UPN, was similarly genre bending. Fashioned from home video taken by the pop star and her famously good-for-nothing backup-dancer husband, the series was near pornographic in its voyeuristic intimacy (emotional, not sexual) and plu-porno in its banality. What do two impossibly rich, young, and famous people do in their spare time? Answer: Have sex and talk about having sex. *Chaotic* was all about unexpected pleasures. As a viewer, there was the consciousness of what Britney Spears wanted to show you (simply, two kids madly in love; i.e., "Britney is all grown up") and the metaconsciousness of the career anxiety that led to her agreeing to this project ("Oh no, Britney is all grown up"); a sense that Kevin, who in the manner of an accomplished concubine withholds his affection to maintain Britney's, was very much just along for the ride; plus a deep existential sadness—or was I just imagining that part? (*Qu'est que c'est* Kevin Federline?)

The two most inventive comics of the current moment, Ricky Gervais and Sacha Baron Cohen, work different riffs on DIY. Gervais was the progenitor and star of the British show *The Office*, a pseudo-documentary like *Blair Witch*, this one about a paper company in Slough, England. The comedy comes almost entirely from the Brit-and-Kev-ian divide between self-image and reality: Gervais's character frantically beseeches the camera for approval as his charges snicker behind his back. The comedy is all about dead air, the awkward moments when Gervais's errant attempts at humor meet either stone faces or the toadying laughter of his one supplicant. Similarly brilliant is his *Ricky Gervais Show*, a regular radio show turned into an audio lark for Britain's *Guardian* newspaper last November that has become the most successful podcast of all time and began its third season this past August. The vibe is not dissimilar to Howard Stern's, though less coarse, but the brilliance comes from Gervais's and longtime collaborator Stephen Merchant's back-and-forth with a former producer and appealing dummkopf, Karl Pilkington. Gervais and Merchant deny that Pilkington is a fictional character (alleged pictures of him do exist, and he appears to have had a career as a radio producer before his appearances here), while stoking the suspicion that Pilkington is either a gifted deadpan comedian or someone else entirely. On the Web, you can make up pretty much anything.

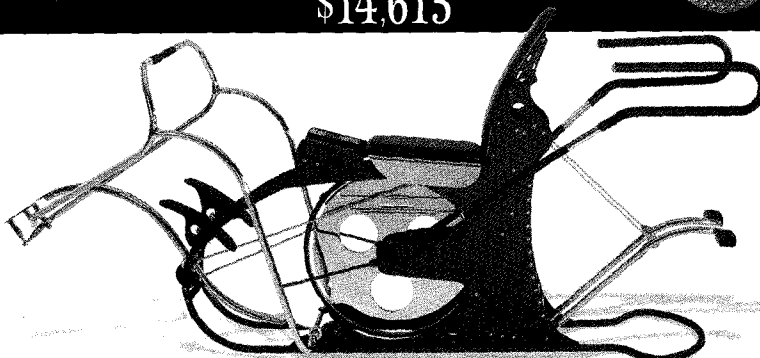
Sacha Baron Cohen's new movie *Borat* may be the funniest comedy in a decade (its full title will give you a whiff of its comic mayhem: *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan*). Cohen is best known for *Da Ali G Show*, which ran for two seasons on HBO and featured Borat as one of three recurring characters played by Cohen. (Like *The Office*, *Ali G* is a British import.) *Borat* is a hybrid comedy-documentary, mostly documentary, in which Borat, a fake Kazakh newsman, travels across America on a quest to forcibly take Pamela Anderson as his wife, all while producing a television show for Kazakhstan about the real America. Real America does not escape unscathed—not the USC fratboy who bemoans the end

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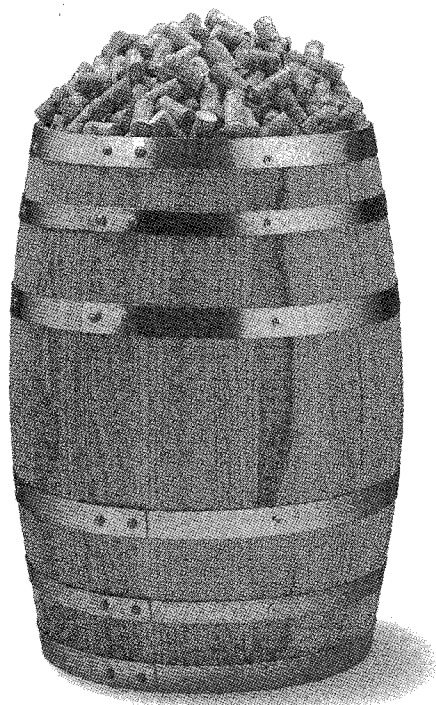
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of slavery, nor the Pentecostals fooled by Borat's preposterous religious conversion, nor the gun-shop owner who all-too-blithely recommends a .357 Magnum when Borat comes in asking for the best gun for shooting a Jew.

What Cohen shares with Gervais (and with much of the best original video on YouTube) is an impatience with the hackneyed routines of traditional American comedy, the predictable double takes, fools needing comeuppance, and so forth. (Wikipedia helpfully distills the sitcom format down to ten basic plots, with eight other lesser-used routines thrown in for variety.) Indeed, one of the funniest moments in *Borat* is his visit to a hapless comedy coach, who attempts to teach him how to successfully pull off a "Not!" joke. Needless to say, he succeeds by not succeeding.

It's telling that no truly successful television sitcom has been launched since *Will and Grace*, in 1998; though *Two and a Half Men*, now in its fourth season, has maintained its lonely perch as the only sitcom in the top twenty shows, it's uninspired stuff, comedy moving to the rhythms of a long-ago moment. Network television, after launching and then canceling scores of sitcoms in the past two years, does seem to finally be moving toward something of a Gervais/Cohen gestalt. The best hour of comedy on network television is the U.S. version of *The Office*, with Steve Carell in the Gervais role, followed by *My Name Is Earl*, a Coen brothers-inspired romp that stays fresh by means of offbeat comic routines, out-of-left-field visual gags, and a commitment to weirdness that simply would not have made it through the network filters a decade ago. Both shows, which air on NBC, are shot "single camera" style: out of the studio and without a laugh track. Cohen, meanwhile, broke through to mainstream audiences playing a surpassingly strange gay French race-car driver in the summer's biggest movie comedy, *Talladega Nights: The Legend of Ricky Bobby*.

No need to go to the movie, of course. You can watch the best bits on YouTube. ▀

Michael Hirschorn is the executive vice president of original programming and production at VH1. He will be writing the Content column in each issue of The Atlantic.

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Unfair Dinkum

Steve Irwin (1962–2006)

BY MARK STEYN

I'd just filed a column for *The Australian* when I got the first e-mail from Down Under about reports of an accident involving the Crocodile Hunter. All journalists, on hearing breaking news of a famous person's injury, assume the announcement of death will follow shortly. President Kennedy and the Princess of Wales being merely the most obvious proof of the wisdom of this rule. But, in the early hours of a Monday morning, when my editor in Sydney told me my piece was being held because Steve Irwin had been killed by the barbed tip of a stingray, I found myself resuspending disbelief. Like a long-distance cyber version of an escapist's audience, I felt vaguely that it was too good an ending, and therefore must be part of the act—that at any minute the hyperactive overgrown schoolboy would emerge off the Queensland coast with his trademark “Crikey!” and a souvenir barb for the trophy room at the Irwin family's Australia Zoo.

The Crocodile Hunter didn't exactly laugh at death, but he was happy to play its straight man. In a FedEx commercial a few years ago, Irwin introduced us to the “Fear Snake,” “the most venomous snake in the world.” “One bite from him, and it's all over,” he began in his exuberantly emphatic semi-parodic Aussie vowels, and then let the creature sink its fangs in. “Yow! Luckily we have had the antivenom sent from America by FedEx.” But, alas, it turned out they'd used a less reliable courier. Fatal error. “In my line of work,” he said, “if you are not absolutely sure, you are absolutely dead.”

When the stingray struck off Batt Reef, Steve Irwin was absolutely sure: he immediately yanked the barb out of his chest; he knew what had happened. But he was still absolutely dead, the first Australian to be felled by a stingray in six decades. The reaction from his compatriots fell into two camps. “It was the way he would have wanted to go,” said

more than a few, though I doubt, with an eight-year-old girl and a two-year-old boy, he would have wanted it quite so soon. From London, the grizzled Aussie feminist Germaine Greer shafted him with a toxic barb all her own. “The animal world has finally taken its revenge on Steve Irwin,” she gloated in *The Guardian*. “You can just imagine Irwin yelling: ‘Just look at these beauties! Crikey! With those barbs a stingray can kill a horse!’ (Yes, Steve, but a stingray doesn't want to kill a horse. It eats crustaceans, for God's sake),” parenthesized Ms. Greer, deploying the novel journalistic device of correcting the dialogue she'd invented for him.

Ms. Greer represented the views of many self-advertised conservationists in her aesthetic distaste for Irwin. By the '90s, the old head-in-the-lion's-mouth, shirt-sodden-by-the-incontinent-lemur wildlife showman was on the endangered species list, and the embodiment of the television naturalist was the BBC's David Attenborough. In the presence of animals, he lowers his voice to a breathy whisper, maintaining the evenly modulated reverent hush even during a terrible outbreak of crabs—120 million of them arriving on the beach at Christmas Island for their annual spawning season. Across the shifting sands, he whispered, the little nippers have been showing up same time every year since time immemorial. Suppose he'd raised his voice. How many of the 120 million in that wall-to-wall crustacean broadloom would have flounced off in a huff? Seven? Twenty-nine? Can crabs even hear the human speaking voice? But Sir David keeps his breathy whisper even when he's back in the BBC studio doing the voice-over.

Irwin never cared much for this approach. “We can't keep looking at wildlife on a long lens on a tripod,” he said. “Then there's this voice of God telling you about the cheetah kill. After 450,000 cheetah kills, it's not entertaining anymore.”

In contrast to Attenborough, the boyishly eager Irwin bounded into the frame like Tigger, leaping after the crocs and bantering at full volume: “Crikey!” “Gorgeous!” “What a beauty!”—lines that Sir David would be unlikely to deploy anywhere other than the later stages of the BBC office Christmas party. Asked by Jay Leno how he determined the sex of a croc, Irwin replied, “I put my finger in here, and if it smiles it's a girl, and if it bites me it's a boy.”

There was more than a grain of truth in the *South Park* episode in which the guys are lounging on the couch watching an Aussie crocodile hunter and his mis-sus gliding down the river. “As we steer our boat down, looking for these dangerous predators . . . boy, there's a king croc right here!” says the TV naturalist. “He must be four meters; twelve, thirteen feet long at least.” The mighty beast raises its head out of the water. “This croc has enough power in its jaws to rip my head right off . . . I've gotta be careful. So what I'm gonna do is sneak up on it and jam my thumb in its asshole.” Back on the couch, the fellows are impressed. “Holy crap, dude!” marvels Stan, as the Aussie leaps in and grabs the croc. “Go, dude, go!” cheers Kyle. “This should really piss it off!” says the Aussie, raising his left thumb. “I've gotta be careful.” The croc yelps up in surprise and then falls back into the water. “That was quite an angry croc,” explains the hunter in the next scene. “But I managed to escape with only a few bruises and a shattered left testicle. Next week we'll look for more of these beautiful creatures, so we can learn more about them by pissing them off immensely. Thanks for watching.”

Bob and Lyn Irwin were a plumber and a nurse from a Melbourne suburb, who moved up north to the Sunshine Coast, bought four acres, and started a reptile park. Given a scrub python for his sixth birthday, Steve was more or less his television persona by the time he was a teenager, the larky lad with the winning spiel who talked the punters through his parents' more ferocious exhibits. A lot of small, broken-down, underfunded animal parks around the world have an Irwinesque figure on the lot, and, in 99.99 percent of cases, the shtick's good enough to get them that

far but no farther. But Irwin was the right man at the right time, just as the cable specialty channels were taking off and just as environmentalism had sapped wildlife education of much of its fun. Irwin was always bursting with joy, and why wouldn't he be? There are more crocs in Oz than ever before, and they're larger than they used to be, too.

He also had the advantage of being Australian, which to American audiences puts you in the category of least-foreign foreigner: Australia, as Ishmael says in a book about another famous hunter who came a cropper underwater, is "that great America on the other side of the sphere." Melville was overstating it a bit, but if you want to make it big in America as a media outdoorsman, being Aussie isn't a bad idea. An American croc hunter comes freighted with all kinds of baggage: Is he your authentic red-state stump-toothed mountain man out of *Deliverance*, or some pantywaist NPR Bambi-boomer enviro-ninny like that bear guy up in Alaska who tried to get in touch with his inner self until a grizzly ripped it out of his chest for him? If you're from Down Under, you avoid all that. Irwin hailed Australia's (conservative) Prime Minister John Howard as "the greatest leader Australia has ever had, and the greatest leader in the world." If he'd said that about Bush, he'd have been savaged more thoroughly than by any croc, but fortunately only seven Americans have heard of Mr. Howard.

There's really only room for one popular Oz character in the American imagination at any one time. Irwin took Paul Hogan's *Crocodile Dundee* persona and artfully extended it to actual crocodiles. He stayed in his uniform of khaki shorts and short-sleeved shirt even when attending awards ceremonies. There were moments when he was laying on the "Crikeys!" and "Bonzas!" and "Fair dinkums!" so thick that you vaguely suspected he might be the Strine (that's Oz talk) version of Maurice Chevalier, who inquired after the run-through of "Thank Heaven for Little Girls," "Did I



sound French enough?" Irwin always sounded Australian enough, happy in his role as his nation's most internationally recognized larrikin and ocker and several other words that don't translate terribly easily into American English. When the larrikin was interviewed by the near homophonic Larry King, the host attempted to pin down Irwin on some of the argot but never progressed much beyond, "'Bloke' is a man?" (You can't put anything over on Larry.)

Some of Irwin's compatriots were a tougher sell. It must be frustrating to explain to foreigners that your modern confident multicultural nation has outgrown its corked hat/boomerang/kangaroo caricature only to discover that the only Aussie they've heard of is the umpteenth variation of it. It's true that Australians are, statistically, one of the most urbanized peoples on earth, and few have actually spent time in the outback, never mind wrestled crocs there. It's also the case that Sydney has a lot more Thai restaurants than it used to—and, come to that, Muslim riots. But few national stereotypes are as appealing as Australia's. By the time Steve Irwin's countrymen

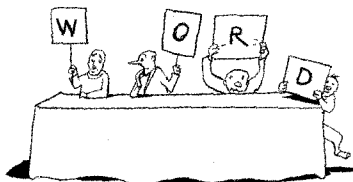
became aware of his global success, he had more viewers in the United States than there are Australians in Australia.

If it was an act, it was very well done. Irwin was forty-four but still a boyish charmer, with a puppy-fat face and long hair that flipped up and down *Charlie's Angels*-like in the bush. At the Australia Zoo, if his wife, Terri, caught him bending over to attend to an animal, she'd always give an appreciative wolf whistle. To be sure, it was something of a surprise to discover that Irwin died filming a segment for his daughter's forthcoming television series, and that eight-year-old Bindi already has her own line of clothing. But the Irwins handled global celebrity less creepily than most.

I spent most of August in Australia, and the first question my children asked was: "Did you meet Steve Irwin?" Sadly, no, but they were impressed to hear I'd met folks who'd met him, like the prime minister and the foreign minister, whose Christmas card showed his family at the Irwins' zoo. And up in Queensland I had the odd feeling of walking through a deserted set. I passed a weird potato-shaped mountain that seemed strangely familiar and realized I knew it from a picture of the Croc Hunter posed in front of it in his trademark crouch.

Less than twenty-four hours passed before the Animal Planet honchos announced that the channel would continue to air the *Crocodile Hunter* shows. But will the millions of children who adored Irwin's life-affirming presence stick with him in posthumous reruns? Or will all those years of close encounters be retrospectively darkened by the very last one? However it turns out, anyone who raised young kids in the half decade either side of the turn of the century will retain a distant memory of a crazy bloke in shorts hugging some leathery old croc or fleeing a Komodo dragon. For him not to be doing it another decade or three seems a great injustice. Or, to modify a phrase, unfair dinkum. ▀

Mark Steyn is a columnist for the Chicago Sun-Times and other publications.



WORD COURT

by BARBARA WALLRAFF

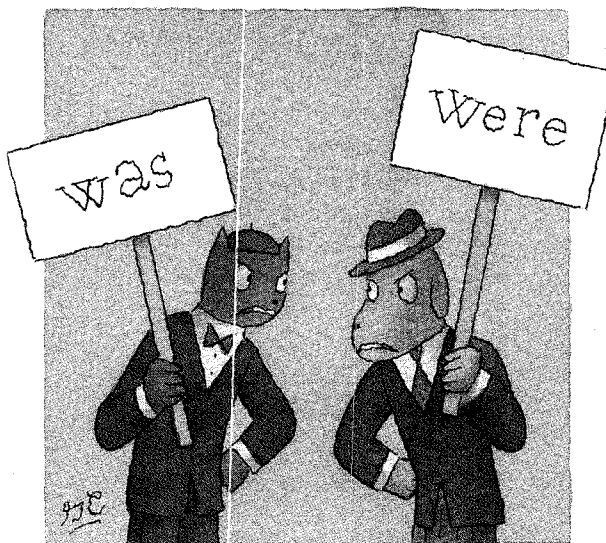
Kenneth Shay, of Ann Arbor, Mich., writes, "Has systematic violation of a particular kind of subject-verb agreement become so commonplace as to be acceptable? The violations in question attend nouns that, if I recall correctly from junior high school, are termed collective: singular concepts that refer to multiples. The violations take a form like 'A large number of insurgents *were* turned back at the border,' instead of 'A large number of insurgents *was* turned back at the border.' Or am I focusing on but a small part of a bigger problem: a failure to distinguish collective nouns from plurals? I encounter variants on 'The seething mass of undergraduates turned *their* anger on the campus police' instead of '... *its* anger on the ...' with distressing frequency and from an expanding variety of sources. Are we in the midst of an unstoppable evolutionary grammatical adjustment?"

Not at all. No adjustment is required, because treating a collective noun as plural has been perfectly acceptable (in the right contexts) for at least a hundred years. For instance, here's a sentence by one Fitzedward Hall, which was published in *The Nation* in 1897: "A good number of them *were*, doubtless, brought across the ocean by British immigrants."

The word *number* is a special case: a *number* of almost always takes a plural verb (as in "A large *number* of insurgents *were* turned back"), and *the number* of almost always takes a singular ("The *number* of insurgents *was* large").

As for other collective nouns, according to H. W. Fowler in his magisterial *Modern English Usage* (1926), they "are treated as singular or plural at discretion—and sometimes, naturally, without discretion." The approved

approach is to treat the noun as singular if you're thinking of the group—what the collective noun names—as an entity: "The *mass* of undergraduates *was* surging toward the police officers." But if you're thinking primarily of the group's members, either treat the phrase as plural or consider lopping off the collective noun. For example, the sentence "The undergraduates were surging toward the police officers" might satisfy you and me both.



Adam Gordon, of Los Gatos, Calif., writes, "At the advertising and marketing agency where I work, we have an ongoing debate about the number of spaces between a terminating period and the first letter of a new sentence. We writers were all taught to use two; my artists insist that one is the current rule. Would you be so kind as to adjudicate?"

Do anything you like in letters, e-mail, business memos, and other writing that's an end in itself, but put one space between sentences in writing that's going to be published, whether in print or on the Web. It's standard.

This wasn't always the case. You can find extra space between sentences in

books from as late as the 1960s. No doubt this was in part an aesthetic choice. But I suspect that extra space between sentences became common mainly because type used to be set by hand, and it was easier to justify the lines by adding substantial spaces between sentences than by inserting smaller spaces between all the words. When automated typesetting came in, the machines could readily add space throughout the line, and the old practice died away. Then

came computerized typesetting. In its early days, two spaces between sentences that came at the end of a line sometimes turned into one awkward space at the beginning of the next line—so publishers told typesetters to break the two-space habit if they hadn't already. And here we are.

Jim Battershill, of North Vancouver, British Columbia, writes, "Please discuss the phrase *corporate citizen*. The usurping of the rights of citizenry by companies is not only an oxymoron, it is a travesty."

Temper, temper! Shouldn't we be glad when corporations behave like responsible members of a community—like good citizens? And isn't it encouraging that enough of them do so that a term for them has been coined? *Corporate citizen* has been in general use for at least twenty years. If corporations and other organizations can be called friends (*friends of the court*, for example, are usually organizations) and enemies (*enemies of the state* sometimes are), surely they can be citizens too.

Do you have a language dispute? Write to *Word Court* in care of The Atlantic Monthly, P.O. Box 67375, Chestnut Hill, MA 02467, or send e-mail to msgrammar@theatlantic.com. All letters become the property of *Word Court*. Ms. Grammar is also on the Web, at www.theatlantic.com/courtrecord.

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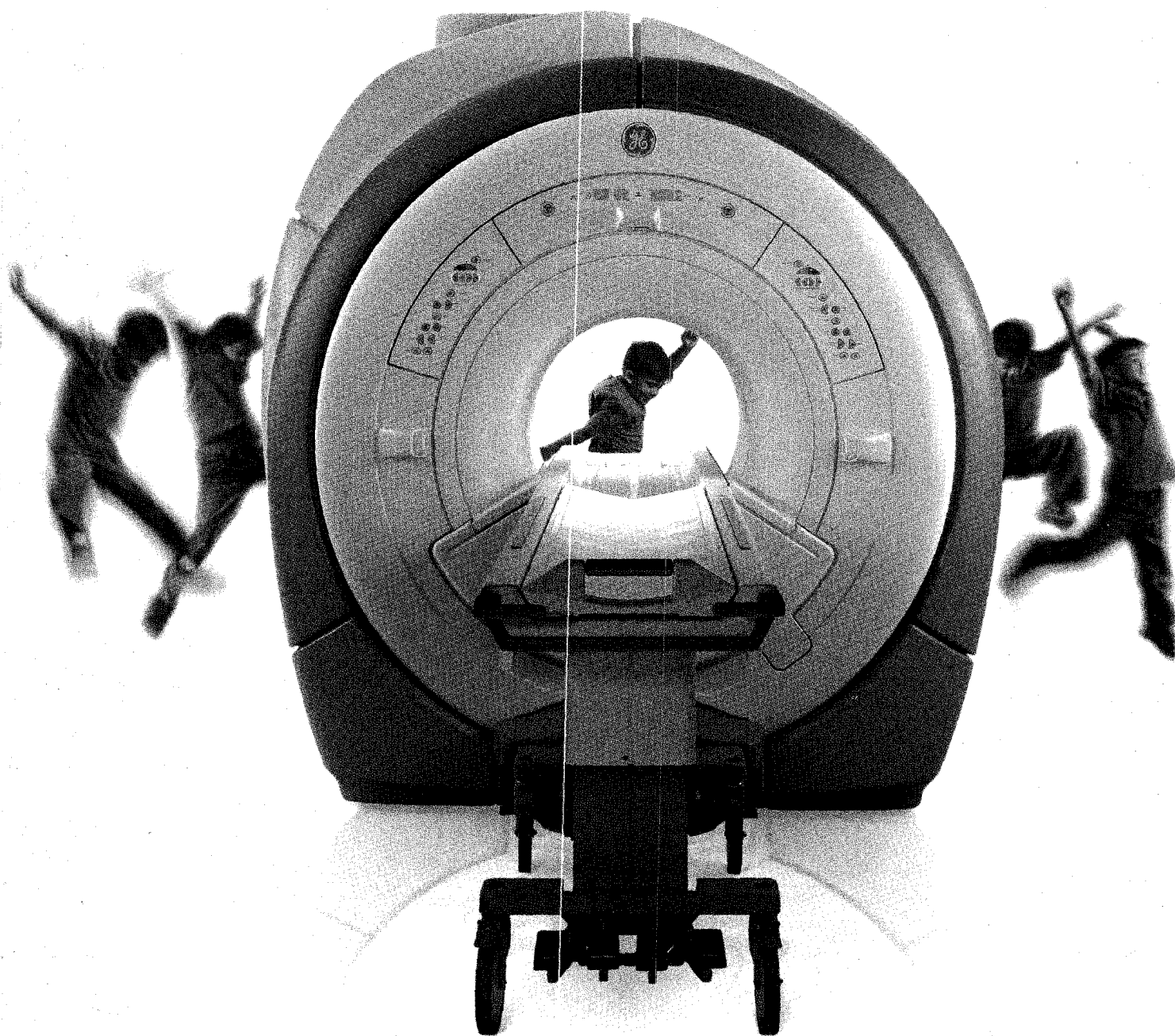
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